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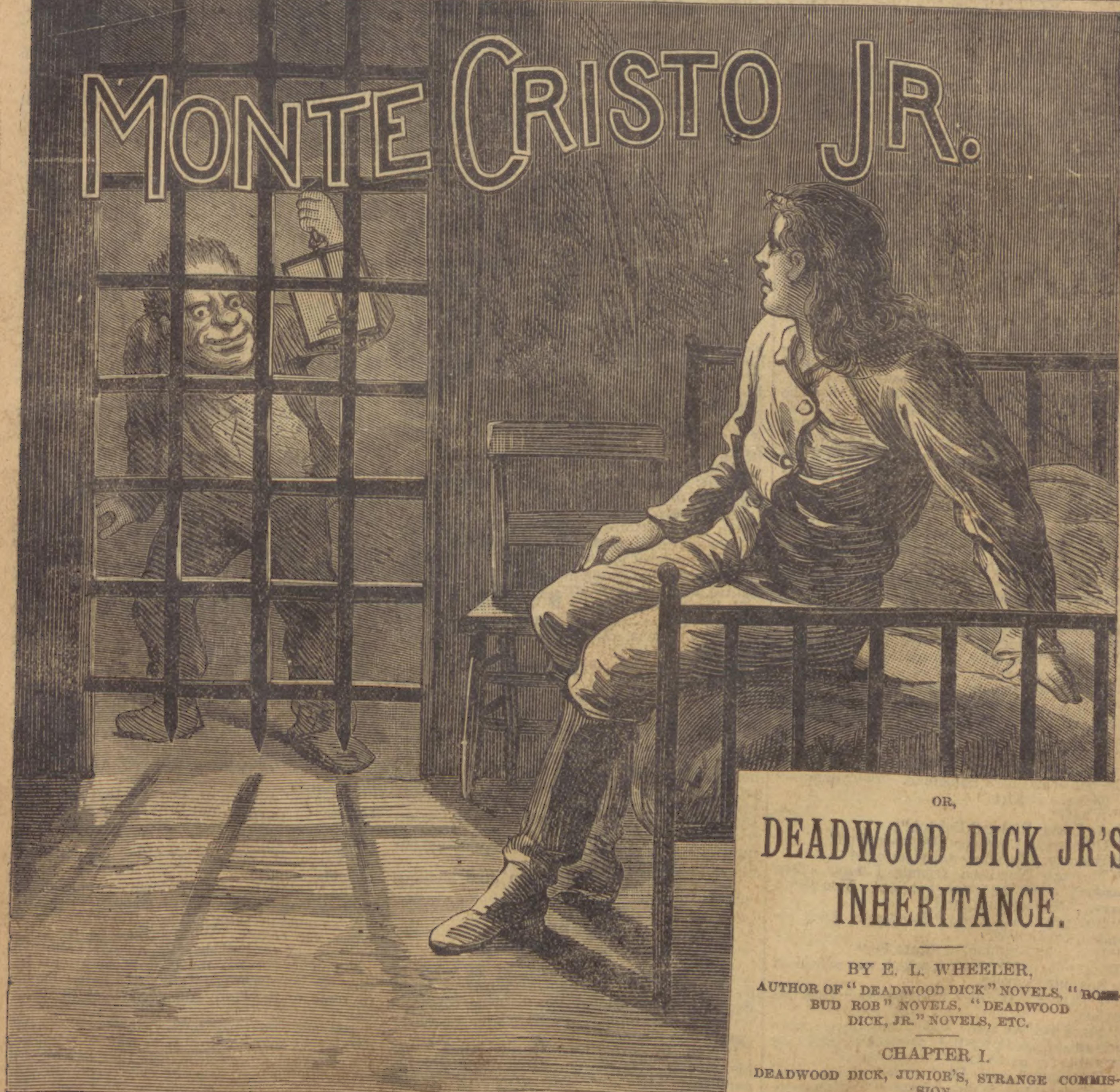
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MONTE CRISTO JR.



OR, DEADWOOD DICK JR'S INHERITANCE.

BY E. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, "BONNIE
BUD ROB" NOVELS, "DEADWOOD
DICK, JR." NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.
DEADWOOD DICK, JUNIOR'S, STRANGE COMMISSION.

DEL NORTE.
The Monaco of America, situated in the
southern part of Colorado, and noted for be-

DICK CALLED OUT: "I SAY THERE, MR OGRE, WHO ARE YOU, AND WHAT DO YOU WANT?"

ing the "flyest" town, the greatest gambling center, and the most dangerous place for a man of means of any place in its section of the State.

Although by no means a city, it is a town of considerable size, and boasts of a considerable floating population.

Its principal and costliest buildings are, as a rule, devoted to the gambler—gilded palaces of sin, many of them, where thousands of dollars change hands, nightly, and which, in point of elegance of arrangement and perfection of management, rival those of any of the more eastern saloons and "halls."

Del Norte is a sort of center of travel, from the four points of the compass, where men of all classes peculiar to the far West congregate.

But seldom, of recent years, have the usual saloon fracases of western life occurred in Del Norte, although hundreds of thousands of dollars change hands there, on every species of game with cards, every month of the year.

But, on the night we have to deal with—occurred one of the most cowardly acts that had taken place in a number of years.

And thereby hangs this tale.

It had been a pleasant summer's day, late in the season, and there was an unusually large influx of visitors into the place—miners, prospectors, rancheros, herdsmen, (the so-called cowboy) rangers, trappers, hunters and the whole *et cetera*, that go toward making up wild western life.

Two men met in front of the Southern Hotel, late in the afternoon, about five o'clock, on the long piazza.

Both were standing near together, smoking Spanish cheroots, and though they had never before met, it was but natural politeness that they should fall into conversation.

One was a rather gaudily attired person of some five and forty years, whose cast of feature and complexion pronounced him a Spanish-American; swarthy skin, black hair and mustache, and whose facial and physical perfections would attract attention and comment in any audience. Then, too, although his dress was rather "loud," it was rich, and he wore expensive jewelry.

The other party was purely American; a round manly face, honest brown eyes, a well-developed figure of medium stature, and a general expression of personal independence, and integrity, were his notable characteristics.

His dress was plain and unassuming, albeit he wore the conventional slouch hat and knee boots of the West, and silver-mounted revolvers were in the silver-chased belt that encircled his waist. A wealth of carefully-kept dark-brown hair fell in graceful waves over his shoulders, and a pretty mustache adorned his lip.

While the younger man placidly smoked his cheroot and gazed up at the mountain-tops, which reflected the sunset's dying rays, the elder man surveyed him rather curiously, as if impressed with his manly beauty.

For, in truth, the young American was handsome—ay, noble looking.

Finally the Spaniard uttered the words:

"I'm going to gamble to-night!"

They were evidently intended for the ears of the younger man, who immediately turned his gaze upon the speaker.

"Did you address me, sir?" he inquired.

"Well, yes, my friend, I did," the Spaniard replied, in excellent English. "You are an American, are you not?"

"I am."

"And proud to say it, no doubt, for you look to be one of nature's noblemen. Your name?"

"Richard Bristol."

"What?"

"As I said, Richard Bristol."

"Otherwise, Deadwood Dick, Junior?"

"Exactly. But how did you guess?"

"Through Northern friends I have often heard of your detective exploits. You are a bravo. Give us your hand."

"But, your name, sir," Deadwood Dick reminded, cautiously.

"Don Jose Mellique, of Santa Fe."

Dick put out his hand, which was seized in the Spaniard's grasp.

"I have never met you before," Dick remarked.

"No, I believe not. But, thinking we were both strangers in town, I thought it might be agreeable for us to know one another."

"Certainly," and Dick regarded the man more favorably. "But, in regard to your opening remark?"

"As I said—I am going to gamble to-night."

"You are a professional!"

"By no means. I am a gentleman of leisure, and the owner of one of the wealthiest estates in New Mexico. However, I have, through recklessness, met with heavy monetary losses lately, and to-night I am going to redeem them."

"You are foolish."

"Why so?"

"Do you not know the repute of Del Norte?"

"Ay! and that was why I came here. There was never a Mellique but what could handle the cards like an expert. I have come here either to make or to break. If I break—well, I don't know what. If I win, all right. I have been crossed in love, and have but little care what becomes of me."

"Pshaw!" said Dick, advisingly; "you look like too sensible a man to throw yourself away for a woman's sake—to be so rash and inconsiderate."

"Thank you. But I have loved with all the ardor of my Castilian nature, yet because I was not nearly so young as herself she rejected my love."

"Does she live in Santa Fe?"

"Yes. She is my brother's adopted daughter. Her *real* name I have never been able to learn, but I do know that, although she bears the name of my brother, she is a native born American, of presumably Yankee parentage!"

"Her name?"

"Donna Nola!"

"Pretty?"

"Beautiful as a hour. I never met her until a few years ago, having been a long time abroad. When I began suit for her hand, I thought, at first, that she fancied me. Then, my nephew, the son of a brother deceased, seemed to draw her away from me, and in desperation I left home. Should I die without leaving a will, this nephew inherits my property, by the provisions of my father's will. Before it shall ever go to him, I will bequeath it to an entire stranger. My brother does not need it, being worth a million, at least, so, whenever I get ready to die, The Turrets go to whomsoever I may elect. There's a secret mine beneath the place, rich in precious ore, but I have never bothered myself to work it, always having plenty of money until Donna Nola made me desperate."

"Now, you know the substance of my story. I have been studying you well. You are a *man*. I like you, as I never liked an American before, except Nola. Now, listen. I am going to gamble, to-night, at the San Carlos. Perhaps I will win—perhaps lose. There is no way of telling just how matters will turn out. But, whatever the result, I have arranged all things. If I detect cheating, there will be trouble. Some one will get hurt. Chances are it will be myself. Now, will you do me a favor?"

"Certainly; what is it?"

"This: If I am shot, take me immediately to my room, at this hotel."

"I will most assuredly."

"In all probability, I will not be shot dead. A lawyer will be in waiting, in the room. In my inside pocket you will find a will, all complete, except the filling in of the name of the legatee, and my signature. If I am conscious, I will direct the matter. If I am dead, inside the hat-band of my hat you will find money. Will you take it, and see that my remains are taken home?"

"I will. But, sir, why be so rash, and—"

"No 'but' about it, Bristol; no words can dissuade me from my purpose. Here is a valuable diamond ring—an old family relic. Take it. Should it become your melancholy duty to take me home, show this to my brother Pedro, and it will insure you his lifelong friendship and hospitality. But, beware lest it fall into the hands of my nephew, Juan, for if so, it will bring about your ruin. Now, remember what I have told you, Bristol. Be at the San Carlos, to-night, and you will see me there. Make no interference in any trouble that may occur, but do my bidding!"

Then, turning, abruptly, Don Jose Mellique entered the hotel.

CHAPTER II.

THE SAN CARLOS TRAGEDY.

DICK BRISTOL had listened to the words of the Spaniard with no small degree of astonishment. He had studied the man, narrowly, in order to determine whether or not he was a crank, or a madman.

"Well, by Jove, this beats the Dutch," was his mental observation, after Mellique's departure. "I've met with a number of odd experiences, but none comparable to this. I can't make it seem that the fellow is a crank, for he bears evidences of education, refinement,

and wide-world experience. Guess he told about the facts of the case, when he said he was love-desperate. Poor fools, we mortal men, to let a woman's pretty face and form run away with our better sense! But, such is life."

"It is incumbent on me to visit the San Carlos, to-night, and as life has been somewhat stagnant of late, I suppose I might as well see the thing out and perhaps prevent the Spaniard from carrying out his desperate purpose—

And to the San Carlos, at the appointed hour, Richard betook himself.

The San Carlos was one of the gaming palaces of Del Norte, and perhaps the best patronized. The exterior was not pretentious, but the interior was beautiful with fine furniture, costly mirrors and pictures and an elaborately furnished bar.

Brilliantly lighted, and the picture of luxury and elegant taste, no room west of Chicago could be found to excel it.

Dick entered the place, paused near the door, glanced over the assemblage, and then abruptly retreated into the street, his face wearing an expression of undisguised surprise.

That he had seen some one he knew was apparent.

He made his way immediately to the hotel, held a short consultation with the office clerk, and then went to his room.

When he came down-stairs and left the hotel, it was in the clever disguise of a black-bearded gent of Jewish blood—the make-up being perfect.

He then returned to the San Carlos, which was comfortably well filled with devotees of the gambling tables.

Jose Mellique was seated at a table with a genteel-looking, middle-aged man, and they were playing poker, each having quite a sizable pile of chips before him.

Although, perhaps neither Dick nor Mellique were acquainted with the fact, this genteel-looking individual was one of the most successful card-players in Colorado, and is, to-day—Dr. Larry Keegan, by name.

There was another attraction within this gilded palace that seemed to have even greater magnetism for the ordinary spectator than even the card-tables, and this attraction embraced three distinct features, a man, an ugly, scrawny-looking mule, and an equally vicious-looking billy-goat.

The first-mentioned stood at the bar, while the others stood near patiently awaiting orders. It was a ludicrous spectacle in that elegantly-furnished saloon.

The center of the group, who was a battle-scarred, sun-tanned frontier veteran, was speaking:

"Yas, yere we are, ther Great Terrific Triangle, Avalanche, Jeremias & Co., ther devastatin' decoction o' demoliton of the West—ther rip-snortin', screamin', gougin', bumped-up hurricane from Devil's Delight, an' we aire driller than ther cavortin' simcons uv ther Desert o' Sahary. So produce yer bottle, gin-jerker, an' let's irrigate our crops. Come thar, set 'er out, lively, or our b'ilers will git dry, an' we'll explode an' bu'st up ther hull shebang!"

"Do you want a drink?" demanded the dapper bartender, setting out a glass.

"Yas, by ther humped-up ham-bone, I want a drink!" the Annihilator roared, "but I don't want none o' thet size nary a time. Jest yer trot out a quart bottle o' reg'lar cold hornet-juice, sech as would take the skin off'm a copper-lined b'iler. That's ther medicine the Triangle imbibes, an' don't forget ter yank the stopper neither."

"A quart of whisky will cost you a V, old man."

"Snortin' snappin'-turtles! Is that any o' yer bizness, ye durned lunk? Why, blast ye, I've paid a sawbuck many's the time, an' never winced er wrinkle!"

"Very well, perdooce yer filthy, and the p'izen is forthcoming!"

The Annihilator planked down a twenty-dollar gold-piece upon the bar with a snort of disgust.

"Ye must persume I'm jest from ther county house, yer coyote. Why, durned be ter yer, I kin buy out yer hull shebang, an' not half try."

"You've got too much lip!" the Adonis behind the bar declared, "an' you'd better buckle in some of it before some one buckles it for you!"

"Mebbe you'd like ter try the bucklin' act?" Avalanche suggested. "If ye wanter try it on, jest h'ist yer corporation over ther bar an' I'll set ther other two spokes of ther corporation at ye, an' if they don't do ye up in short meter, I'll give ye ther change outen that double. Why, thar's his goatship, Jeremias, kin lick spots out

o' ye in less'n a jerked jiffy. Come! aire ye goin' ter perdue the throat-wet, or ain't ye?"

A bottle was placed upon the bar, and the Annihilator placed it to his lips and took a short sip.

"Bad stuff!" he said, with a dubious shake of the head. "Why, that aire stuff would kill an Injun at forty rods."

"No better in Colorado!" declared the dispenser.

"Y'r another! Mebbe I ain't much of a judge myself, 'cause I never drank more'n forty bar'l. But I've got some one as kin tell a good article just as well as any revenue detective. Hyar, Jeremiah, jest pass yer lucid opinion on ther vartues of this 'ere p'izen," and thrusting the nozzle of the bottle into the goat's mouth, Avalanche allowed some of the liquor to run down his throat.

No sooner done, than Jerry stamped one foot angrily, and uttered a discordant "baa-a-a!"

"Thar, didn't I tell ye? By ther great ham-bone, Jerry knows good from bad, every day in a week. Heer, you Prudence Cordelia, you kin hev the rest, ye omnannerly beast."

And, to the amusement of the crowd, the old man poured the contents of the bottle down the animal's throat, at which Prudence nodded her head and frisked her tail, as much as to say, "that's the proper caper!"

In the mean time, the antics of Avalanche and his pets had not attracted the attention of Mellique and Doc Keegan from their game, of which Deadwood Dick, Jr., was an interested spectator, as were several others.

The doctor was an expert player, but evidently no match for the Spaniard, for he lost steadily.

Mellique's chips already called for several thousand dollars, besides an equal amount he had cashed.

Keegan's usually bland countenance was beginning to assume anything but a pleasant expression; while, as for Mellique, he played with a cool indifference, and manifested no particular satisfaction at his run of good luck.

The game was played on the square, neither man showing a disposition to cheat.

Finally on losing a big "pot" Keegan uttered a growl of rage.

"Curse your infernal luck!" he cried, "are you cheating, or how is it you are continually winning?"

"I should presume you are old enough a card-player, to detect me, if I had been cheating," was the quiet reply.

"I'm not so sure about that!" was the retort. "Some players are so clever at cheating, that others cannot detect them."

"Then, do you accuse me of cheating?" Mellique demanded, flushing dark with anger.

"I did not say so. We will play the last game, and I'll stake my last two thousand on winning. If I lose, I'm broke, and you're in ten thousand dollars."

"Very well."

Four thousand dollars were put into the pot. Then a new pack of cards was procured, shuffled and dealt.

"I call you!" Keegan said instantly, after looking over his cards, and laid down four jacks, with a smile of triumph.

"That don't scare me!" replied the other. "I have four aces!" And he raked in the pot!

Keegan instantly leaped to his feet, and leveled a cocked revolver at his opponent.

"You have robbed me!" he cried, fiercely. "I demand back the money you have won from me!"

"You will not get it!" Don Jose retorted, also leaping to his feet.

"Then, die like the Greaser dog you are!" the other yelled, and the next instant he fired.

With a groan the Don staggered backward, and fell heavily to the floor.

The next instant there was another pistol report, and Doc Keegan took an unceremonious tumble, blood pouring from a wound in his forehead.

Then, followed a scene of wildest confusion, but no one appeared to know who had shot Keegan.

CHAPTER III.

DICK'S INHERITANCE.

DEADWOOD DICK was quickly beside Don Jose, and kneeling, examined his wound.

It was a bad one, and liable to prove fatal, but the Don was still conscious.

"It's as I expected," he whispered. "I'm done for. Take me to my room."

"Do you recognize me?" Dick asked, for he still wore his Jew disguise.

"Yes," was the reply, "I knew you when you

first entered. Don't waste any time. Get some one to help you."

Dick found no difficulty in procuring assistance, and the Don was lifted from the floor and carried to the room that had been assigned him at the hotel. The lawyer was there, as appointed.

Here the Don was deposited upon a bed, and a doctor called in; but, when he had made an examination, he told the wounded man there was no hope for his recovery.

Every one was then dismissed from the room except the lawyer, who answered to the name of Sykes. He and the Spaniard were then closeted, for some time, after which Deadwood Dick was recalled.

He approached the bed, and at once saw that Mellique was failing rapidly.

"My friend," the Spaniard said, "I am not much longer for this world. The worst has been done, and now, will you carry out my wishes, as you promised?"

"I will," Dick replied, gravely. "I never make a promise that I do not intend to keep."

"Very well. I ought not to have questioned your word, sir, for I know you to be true. But, now listen: When I am no more, box up my remains and accompany them to Santa Fe. Go to my brother, Pedro Mellique, and explain the circumstances of my death, and show him the diamond ring, and he will make you thrice welcome."

"Here are two papers. One is a private letter to my brother, the other is my will. Give both to Pedro, and he will make known to you their contents."

"Of the money you will find on my person, use sufficient to defray the expenses to Santa Fe, and give me a decent burial. Of the balance, you are to see the Donna Nola, in private, and give her one-half. The remaining half you are to retain as a present from me. Sykes, here, will accompany you to Santa Fe, to assist in the proving of the will."

"Now, then, two more things: Are you married, sir?"

"No. I have been, but my wife is dead."

"Then it is my dying hope that you meet Donna Nola, and find such favor in her eyes that it will eventually terminate in your marriage, and that you will be the means of solving the mystery that overhangs her life."

"And now last, but not least, let me give you a warning: When you arrive in Santa Fe, and it is known how I have left my property, no matter where you go, or what you do, beware of Juan Mellique! He will be your bitter enemy, and, as an enemy, Juan is a subtle, dangerous man!"

"But, I do not understand, sir. Why should he be my enemy?"

"Because, by making this will, I have disinherited him of my almost princely estate, known as The Turrets—a property he has always hoped and schemed to possess."

"But, what has that to do with his enmity for me?"

"This much: that I have made you my heir, and he will hate you with all the rancorous spite of his evil nature!"

"You have made me your heir, sir?" Dick exclaimed, his surprise knowing no bounds.

"Ay! even so."

"But, for what cause? I am naught to you but a stranger, and others have stronger claims upon you!"

"No. I have seen fit to make you my heir in preference to all others. The Turrets is yours, and no one can rightfully wrest the property from you. Above all, do not allow them to do so."

"Now, here. Take the money and the papers and put them away on your person. Then, leave me until I send for you, as I have something else to say to the lawyer."

Dick followed the instructions and retired, wondering what would be the next experience to mark his already eventful career.

Strange indeed had been the life he had led, since the time he had first assumed the name of Deadwood Dick, Junior; and was he now on the verge of one stranger and more momentous than all others?

After leaving the Don's room, he went downstairs, left the hotel, and sought the San Carlos gaming-hall, for his curiosity was great to learn if Doctor Keegan had been killed.

Arriving at the ball, he learned that Keegan had been removed to his home, under a doctor's care; and that it was not likely he would recover.

"But, we ketched ther cuss as salivated him," added Dick's informant, "an' lodged him in jail, an' he kin consider hisself lucky ef he ain't

yanked out afore mornin' an' strung up ter the limb of a tree. We fellers beer in Del Norte don't 'low no cold-blooded murderin' a-goin' on 'round this town, not by a jugful."

"Why, who shot the gambler?" Dick inquired, for really, he had no idea himself.

"Why, et war that old chap, over at the bar, as was tryin' to make hisself funny by stuffin' bug-juice down his mule's throat. Old Avalanche, he called himself, an' he allowed he could clean out the hull town, but we jugged him just the same!"

And with this information the speaker turned importantly away.

Dick whistled softly to himself.

"Avalanche in jail, eh?" he mused. "Well, this is a bad go! I certainly had no idea of seeing the old chap in Del Norte to-night. He turns up everywhere. Something must be done to get him out of this scrape. But what?"

That was a question, and one, too, that involved considerable perplexity.

If Mellique died, it was Dick's intention to leave for Santa Fe on the morrow; but now, this was not to be thought of, unless he could free the Annihilator.

Avalanche must be liberated by all means.

But how?

By casual inquiry Dick ascertained the location of the jail, and quitted the San Carlos.

Outside the night was dark as Sygia—so intensely black that one could scarcely see his hand before his face.

The jail was some distance away, but Dick soon neared it.

As he did so, a voice called out:

"Halt! who comes there?"

"Then there was the audible click of a rifle-lock.

"Humph! The calaboose is guarded on the outside," Dick muttered. Then aloud he cried:

"It's me—Smith!"

"What Smith?"

"Jack Smith!"

"Waal, Jack Smith, you just git up and hump yerself on ther back trail, or I'll fill ye full o' plumbago. Don't allow no one 'round hyer to-night. Now git!"

"You bet," responded Dick, and he beat a hasty retreat.

"When out of earshot, however, he paused.

"Now, see here, my fine fellow," he mused, "you're just my mutton. I'll approach you on another tack, and lay you out. Ef you're outside, it stands to reason there ain't no guard on the inside. I'll get your keys, release Old Avalanche, and no one will ever be the wiser as to how he escaped. So look out for me, sentinel."

Equipping himself with a stout club, which he happened to run across, he made a wide *detour* around the jail.

Then, with the stealth of a cat, he crept near to the guard, whose tramp! tramp! tramp he could hear.

Closer and closer he drew, until he could almost touch the fellow with his stick.

The guard was standing directly in front of the door of the jail, which was a small concern, built of stone. He was whistling softly to himself.

A little nearer drew Dick, then hauling off, he struck the guard a heavy blow over the head with the club.

Down went the fellow like a log, and did not attempt to arise. A good reason, too, for he was knocked senseless as a log.

Kneeling beside him, Dick quickly found the key in one of his pockets. To unlock and open the door was but the work of a moment.

"Avalanche! Avalanche!" he cried.

"Hello!" was the reply. "Who's callin'?"

"A friend. Come, the door's open. Hurry out!"

The scout needed no second invitation, but was out in the open air in a jiffy.

"Great ham-bone, who aire ye?" he demanded, peering into Dick's face.

"Deadwood Dick, of course! But, there's no time to chin. Fly for your life, while you have time. I'm going to Santa Fe. Meet me there. Now, git!"

CHAPTER IV.

CANCELING A WEDDING.

Two months later.

The next scene of our story takes place in the capital and most important city in New Mexico, namely, Santa Fe.

It is rather an attractive place, and full of life and bustle. Upon one of the most aristocratic thoroughfares of the city, lined with spacious residences, stands one of pretentious appearance.

It is a large block-stone dwelling, set down upon a spacious, well-shaded lawn, and has every surrounding and general appearance of belonging to a man of considerable means, if not of great riches.

The house itself is of rather odd shape, being two full high stories in height, and having many odd "L's," gables and windows.

It is night, and the mansion is ablaze with light, while hundreds of Chinese lanterns are strung from tree to tree, illuminating the grounds. A wide piazza, as usual in hot climes, runs around the whole house, and upon this gayly dressed couples are seen promenading, while from within doors come the throbbing strains of terpsichorean music.

But, let us enter—not the great, elegantly furnished parlors, where bevy of richly dressed people are whirling hither and thither in the mazes of the giddy waltz—but to a well-furnished library, where two gentlemen are seated at a table, whereon are a bottle of wine and glasses.

The one is a portly, pleasant-appearing gentleman, of fifty, with side-whiskers and a ruddy face, and well dressed.

At a glance, he is evidently of Spanish-American birth.

The other is a young man, but little over age, if that—a decidedly good-looking fellow, with a round, handsome face of manly expression, dark-brown eyes, hair and mustache, his hair flowing in graceful waves down over his shoulders.

He is evidently a full-blooded American, is dressed in the height of New York fashion, wears costly diamonds, and one would scarcely recognize our hero, Richard Bristol, otherwise Deadwood Dick, Junior.

"Yes, Bristol, my boy, I can never find sufficient means to express the gratitude I bear for you, for assisting me to keep back the truth, until this momentous night!" the elder man was saying.

"Within an hour, Donna Nola will have become Don Juan's bride, and then one of the objects of my later life will have been accomplished. Juan is rich in his own right, and the loss of The Turrets will but little affect him. He has won a prize of a wife, and will be content."

"I fear not, Don Pedro," Dick replied, soberly, "and I sometimes feel sorry I consented to your proposal. When Don Juan comes to learn that Don Jose left a will, and who the real heir is, and the trick you have played upon him, I anticipate there will be a deuce of a row!"

"Pshaw! no; Juan always listens to me, like an own son, and I can easily quiet him down."

"Well, perhaps; but, really, I have sincere doubts about the matter, sir; while, as for Donna Nola, it seems to me like a crime to force her to marry a man she has no love for."

"No use to talk that way, young man. No force has been used!"

"It amounts to about the same thing. She was given to understand before she consented to the engagement, that when she was Don Juan's affianced wife, she would receive the history of her early life. This promise has not been kept."

"She told you this?"

"She did, and more—that, marrying Juan, she was committing a sacrilege, for she positively hated her affianced husband!"

The Don's brow darkened.

"By my soul, I don't like this, from you, a guest in my own house!" he sputtered.

"Can't help it whether you do or not," Dick bluntly replied. "It's simply the truth. If the marriage takes place, it will be a most unhappy union, for the Donna Nola cares nothing for your nephew."

"I dare say you've an idea in your head that she cares more for you!" snapped the Don.

"No, sir, I have never even intimated such a thing."

"Pshaw! Let us not quarrel. Nola does not care the snap of my finger for you. Because she has treated you with rather unusual cordiality during your stay here, you should not infer that she cares a fig for you. She simply did it to tease Juan. But, let the subject drop. They will be married, in an hour; and to-morrow I will take you to the Pines, and show you your estate. So drink up your wine, and we will take a look into the parlors!"

The wine was drank, and they were about to arise from the table, when a young man strode into the room.

He was of about Dick's age and physique, and possessed a dark Spanish face of some pretensions to good looks, with black eyes, hair, and curling mustache.

He wore a handsome full-dress suit, that ill-became the angry scowl upon his face.

Striding up to the table, he slapped a note upon it, in front of Don Pedro.

"Read that!" he cried.

The note was quickly opened and perused by the Don, who immediately leaped to his feet with an imprecation.

"Come with me!" he cried, seizing Juan by the arm. "We shall see about this."

And they hurried from the library.

The note was left behind on the table.

With a faint smile, Dick picked it up.

"I think I've an idea of the contents," he thought.

It was written on a tiny sheet of scented note paper, and ran as follows:

"DON JUAN:—I have made up my mind that I cannot marry you. So you may as well dismiss the guests.
NOLA."

"As I thought," Dick muttered. "There will be trouble in camp, now. I wonder where Nola is?"

Since Dick had come to Santa Fe, he and the Don's beautiful adopted daughter had been much in each other's society and greatly to the disapproval of Don Juan.

There was a little rustic arbor in the lower end of the grounds, all covered over with vines, and when they wanted to chat together they were wont to meet there.

Dick bethought himself of the tryst, now, and quietly leaving the house, he stole away toward this green nest.

All was silent as he drew near, but the moment he entered the bower a pair of arms were thrown lovingly about his neck, and a tearful voice exclaimed:

"Oh, Dick, is it you? Have you heard about it?"

"Yes, Donna, I even read the note. It is going to create trouble, I fear."

"I cannot help it if it does. Oh, Dick, I could not marry that man whom I so despise and fear!"

"Well, I can't say I blame you. I dislike the fellow myself. Come and sit down, Donna, and we will talk about it."

"Please don't call me Donna, Dick. I hate that title. Call me just plain Nola, the same as I call you Dick. Oh, tell me: what am I going to do?"

"Well, I'm afraid that will be a hard job for me to do, Nola. I suppose the Don will be incensed at you for refusing to marry Juan, will he not?"

"Oh, yes, he will be fearfully angry, and I dare not go back to the house. I believe he would kill me, he has such a violent temper. Dick, you are the only friend I have now. For Heaven's sake, take me away from here! I will go anywhere, only to escape from here. You know I love you—you cannot help from seeing that. It was for you I broke off with Juan. Perhaps, had you never come here, I should have taken the fatal step and sacrificed myself to Juan Mellique. But now—never! Marry me, Dick, and take me forever out of the power of Don Pedro and Juan!"

She threw her arms impulsively about his neck and burst into sobs, her head resting upon his shoulder.

"Sh!" Dick said, pressing his lips to her forehead. "Your weeping may attract attention this way. Don't cry, for I'll try and get you out of this trouble in one way or another. I know you do like me, Nola, but I am afraid you have not known me long enough to be sure you would like to marry me."

"Oh, yes, I have! There is no one on earth I would rather have than you."

"Well, I'll think it over. In the mean time, do you not know of some kind family who would take you in and shelter you for a few hours, until I can see how the land lays and make some needed arrangements?"

"I know of but one place. There is a minister and his wife, who live out on the outskirts of the town. I visit them often, out of charity, for they are very poor. Perhaps they would take me in."

"Then lose no time, but go to them at once. If they are good Christian people, and you tell them your story, there is no doubt but what they will let you in and care for you. Here is money. Pay them well, and remain with them until I call for you, be it in an hour, day, month or year."

"Oh, Dick, not so long as—"

"Tut! tut! Fear not, for I will come as soon as possible, and when I do come, it will be to have the minister unite us in marriage."

"Dick, do you really mean this? You are not deceiving me?"

"By no means, my Nola. And when you are my wife, you are also mistress of 'The Turrets.'"

"What?"

"Just as I say. When you marry me, you marry 'The Turrets.'"

"Pray explain. I do not understand."

"Well, you see, before he died Don Jose left a will, disinheriting Don Juan, and making me his heir. This fact I communicated to Don Pedro, here, who enjoined me to silence, until after your marriage, fearing, were my inheritance known to Juan, it would create a rupture. I shall keep back the truth no longer, now, but make preparations to take possession of my new home and bride. But, you had best go while you have time."

"Yes, I will go, Dick, my darling, and pray I may soon see you again. But, promise me one thing: that you will not venture near 'The Turrets,' until you have first heard my story about the place."

"Very well, my dear. It shall be as you wish."

Then, after a loving embrace, they parted, Nola hastening away out of the grounds, by a rear gate.

CHAPTER V.

WRATH UNLOOSED.

AFTER watching until Nola was safely out of the grounds, Dick hastened back toward the mansion.

"I'll wager I'm in for some trouble," he muttered, "for no doubt both of the Dons will accuse me of being the cause of the Donna's change of mind. But, let them accuse, and be hanged! I ask no odds of them. Nola is mine, in spite of them, and so is 'The Turrets.' So, what care I? By the way, it occurs to me I had better put my papers in a place of safe-keeping, so that, in case of trouble, I cannot lose them. The will has not yet been proved, and, should it be destroyed, my claim to 'The Turrets' would be worthless. To-morrow, Sykes will return from Santa Rosa, and then the matter of the will must and shall be settled. But, what shall I do with my papers, for the present?"

He paused outside of the mansion, and deliberated.

"I might intrust them to Nola's hands, were she here," he mused, "but as she is not, I must dispose of them in some other way. But, how—where? Ah! I have it, now!"

That very day he noticed a tin tobacco-box lying on the lawn. It would be large enough to hold the will, the ring, and a few other private papers he possessed, including his U. S. Detective warrant.

So he began to search for it, and in a few minutes succeeded in finding it.

Placing in it such things as he did not care to carry about his person, including the better portion of his money, he firmly closed down the cover, and, proceeding to an obscure part of the grounds, he cut out a square piece of sod and laid it aside.

Then he scooped out some of the dirt, and wrapped it up in a paper. Next he replaced the box in the hole, and returned the sod to its original position.

Then, disposing of the package of dirt, the job was completed, and he returned to the mansion and mingled among the dancers.

It was over an hour ere he saw anything of either of the Dons, but finally they entered the parlor together, looking anything but good-natured.

Dick had just finished a waltz with Myra Mellique, the Don's own daughter, when, while standing by and watching the other waltzers, he felt a touch upon his shoulder.

Turning, he came face to face with Don Pedro.

"I would like to see you in the library, young man," the Don said, and turned abruptly away.

"Now for it," thought Dick, as he followed. "As Old Avalanche would say, 'there's a hail-storm of demolition about to burst forth.'

The two entered the library and became seated.

Don Juan was not present.

Don Pedro's face was clouded with anger.

"Bristol," he said, "where is Donna Nola?"

"Donna Nola?" echoed Dick. "Why, somewhere about the house, isn't she?"

"No, sir, she is not!"

"Then, how do you expect me to know where she is? I saw her early in the evening, and should suppose she would now be dressing for the bridal ceremony."

"She is not in the house, sir, nor to be found anywhere about the premises."

"Indeed! Why, that is strange! What can have become of her?"

"You can best answer that question, sir, and you *must* answer it!"

"If! Why, you talk foolish, sir. What do I know about the Donna? I've not been dogging her footsteps every minute to keep her in sight!"

"That matters not a whit, sir. You know where she is, and have got to tell or suffer the consequences. You've caused all the mischief in my house you are likely to."

"In what way, sir? Have I not conducted myself as a gentleman since I have been here?"

"No, sir, you have *not*. You, knowing that the Donna Nola was the affianced wife of Don Juan, have sought, by every power you possess, to fascinate and infatuate her. You have succeeded in turning her foolish young head, and she has broken off the match with Juan at the very bridal hour, and put disgrace upon the never-before dishonored name of Mellique. Ay! even more—you have abducted the poor child, and I shall hold you responsible!"

"'Tis false! I have not abducted your daughter! If she has fled, she did so on her own account. As you well know by our previous interview to night, I have never put forth the slightest impediment to the marriage; indeed, in keeping silent concerning the inheritance, I have favored the match. You are both unmanly and unjust in making this attack on me, and you know it well!"

"Bah! you are a liar, and a double-faced scoundrel, and you shall answer for this night's disgrace with your life. Up-stairs Juan is locked in a room, raving like a madman. But for me, he would have killed you, ere this!"

Dick smiled, provokingly: then he suddenly arose, his face stern, his eyes flashing dangerously.

"Don Pedro Mellique!" he cried, "I will listen to no more insults from you. I thought you a gentleman, but, now, I see that you are not one. Understand this: I fear neither you nor your nephew. I shall leave your house, and take up my quarters at the Planter's Hotel, until I assume control of 'The Turrets.' You need no longer seek to keep from Don Juan the fact that I am owner of that property. So, if you want anything of me, you will find me at the Planter's. Good-night!" and the young detective started out of the room, and left the house.

He went direct to the Planter's Hotel, and registered, and there learned where he could find a minister.

Then, to the minister's he went, and obtained an interview.

His object in this visit, was to find the name of the minister to whose house Nola had fled, and where his residence was located; for he had neglected to make these inquiries of Nola.

The minister gave him the desired information, and he took his departure. The impoverished clergyman's name was Salem, and inside of an hour, Dick stood knocking at the door of Mr. Salem's not very palatial residence.

The summons was answered by a meek-faced, neatly-clad middle-aged woman.

"Is the Reverend Mr. Salem at home?" Dick asked, politely.

"Yes, sir. Will you walk in?"

Dick did walk in, to what proved to be a large but humbly furnished kitchen, the most conspicuous furniture of which were a number of clothes bars, loaded down with laundry work.

There were three persons in the room, as Dick entered—the minister's wife, the minister himself, a thin, consumptive-looking man, and—Nola, who, now arrayed in a calico dress, was actually assisting Mrs. Salem at ironing!

She dropped her flat-iron plump on the floor, however, when she saw Dick, and with a glad cry rushed forward to meet him.

"Oh! Dick, how glad I am to see you here," she said, putting her arms about his waist. "I was so afraid you wouldn't come, very soon. See, I've been trying my hand at housework, so I would know how to do things, when we are settled at The Turrets. But, come here: I most forgot, I was so glad to see you. Mr. and Mrs. Salem, this is my friend, Mr. Bristol, whom I was telling you about!"

Both the minister and his wife shook hands with Dick, and bade him a cordial welcome.

"It was very good of you to take Nola in," Dick said, "and I will pay you well."

"Nay, speak not of pay, sir, for the good young lady has paid us a long way ahead, and put us in comfortable circumstances. Had she come penniless, she should have had shelter. She is a good girl, sir, and you may well be proud of her, if you are to be married. But, we hope you will not take her away from us,

so soon, for we love to have her here. She has been a good Samaritan to us, in days of adversity."

"I shall not take her for a few days yet, until I get matters well arranged for her comfort."

"And so you are to be the new master of 'The Turrets,' my friend?"

"Yes, sir; so it is willed."

"Well, I wish you all the good luck in the world, but I have grave misgivings you won't like the place, grand in many respects though it is. If you live a year there, you'll do better than any one else has done since I've known it, and I've lived here since I was a child."

"Indeed! Nola was telling me something about the place having a history. And, now, dear, let's have the story."

"Mr. Salem can tell it better than I, so let him. But first, tell me what happened when you went back."

"Oh! the Don and I had a little growl, and I changed boarding-places, that's all. Now, Mr. Salem, let's hear about 'The Turrets,' and after you are through, if Nola isn't too proud to be married in calico, we'll have a quiet little wedding."

"But, I am too proud," laughed Nola, "and as I know the story, while Mr. Salem is telling it to you, I will change this dress for the one I was to have married the Don in!"

And she and Mrs. Salem sought an adjoining room.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TALE OF THE TURRETS.

"WELL, sir," said Mr. Salem moving closer to the fire-place, for the evening was a trifle chill, even for that warm climate—well, sir, it ain't often I'm called upon to speak of 'The Turrets' history, but since it's you, and you're to be its owner, I'll tell you the story as it goes, not vouching for its truth, you know. "Well, years upon years ago, no one knows how many, 'The Turrets' was built. It is a large stone structure, in the heart of the mountains, half a day's ride northeast of here. Some believe it was built by a wealthy Spanish robber, not many decades after New Mexico was first colonized by Spaniards in 1582. Others think it of the troublous times of the last century when Indian uprisings were frequent.

"However that may be, it stands there now, as it has stood certainly for over a century, a grim irregular mass of ponderous block stone, situated among the beetling crags, and surrounded by precipices, on three sides, the fourth leading onto two thousand acres of the grandest farming land in the whole territory.

"It is a picturesque place, huge in size, with castellated turrets that remind one of pictures of some grand old European castle. And yet, while picturesque, there is something so uncanny and awe-inspiring about it as to repel the timid and fill the superstitious with dread."

"By Jove! I believe I shall like it!" Dick declared, enthusiastically.

The parson shrugged his shoulders.

"You must have a queer taste, to like the place because it is uncanny," he answered.

"Maybe so, but I like solitude and that which is wild and odd. Have you ever explored the house?"

"No, indeed! and few ever have in this century. Those who have, or claim to have done so, tell wonderful stories of sights they have seen, and mysteries they have encountered; tell of underground dungeons and dismal passages, from which emanate blood-curdling sounds; tell of hot and burning blasts that sweep through the mighty halls, and of various other startling things."

"For the past forty years it is said to be haunted by a nondescript, half human and half beast, which the few who have seen could accurately describe, as it appeared to them but for an instant, and frightened them so that they took to flight."

"How did the property fall into Jose Mellique's hands?"

"Well, through gambling. Fifty years ago, a Polish exile, named Petroziski, together with a son, took possession of the place with the avowed purpose of spending the remainder of his days. He had plenty of wealth, and furnished the castle with lavish taste. His son, a young man of twenty, and himself dwelt there in solitude, and few ever went near them."

"Finally, after a ten years' residence, the son came here and reported that his father had mysteriously disappeared, and that immediately afterward, a demonish thing, half-devil, half-man, had made its appearance, and continuously haunted the halls and corridors, and so terri-

fied him, the son, that he had been forced to leave.

"The story was generally discredited, and so a party of adventurers and curious ones accompanied the son to The Turrets to investigate, and he satisfied them to their utter consternation that his report had not been fictitious, and they fled from the place in hot haste. Other visitors reported seeing the same hideous object, which gained the name of the Man-Dragon.

"Petroziski came back to this city and never went near The Turrets again. He however perfected arrangements with the Government that made him sole owner of the property. After he did this, he frankly admitted that he believed a secret gold mine existed beneath the castle, and that the Man-Dragon was its guardian. Later, another Russian came here and offered Petroziski an enormous sum for the place, which was flatly refused. This fact, coupled with that of the would-be-purchaser being a Russian, set people to thinking, and the place has since been regarded as of priceless value.

"Well, Petro had loads of money and went to gambling, and gradually his fortune melted away until he got down to his last dollar. Five years ago he played his last game with Don Jose Mellique, who was one of the luckiest gamblers of the day. Petro had no money, but offered to play The Turrets against ten thousand dollars. The offer was accepted, the game played, and Don Jose won. Petro then assigned the property to Don Jose and shot himself dead.

"And now you have about all of the story of The Turrets that is known at the present day," Mr. Salem said in conclusion.

"And a strange one it is," Dick declared.

"Did Don Jose ever visit his purchase?"

"Frequently."

"Did he ever see the Man-Dragon?"

"Oh, yes; but he claimed to have no fear of it."

"Do you know if any one has visited the place, recently?"

"I do not."

"How about the furniture; I suppose that remains."

"What's left of it, I presume. But, after all these years, it can't be worth much."

At this juncture, the ladies entered.

Nola was arrayed in a bridal costume, and looked inexpressibly lovely.

Soon afterward, she and Dick stood up, side by side, in the presence of the minister and his wife, and the divine, in solemn tones, read to them the good old Methodist marriage service, asked the all-important questions, and received each an affirmative, and then pronounced the benediction that made them man and wife.

At the express wish of both Dick and Nola, Mr. Salem was to keep the marriage certificate, until they called for it. It was also arranged that Nola was to remain with the Salems, until The Turrets was ready for her.

Soon after midnight Dick bade his bride and the Salems good-by, and took his departure, for the second time in his young life, a Benedict, and a happy one at that.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WRONG MAN.

WHEN Deadwood Dick arrived at the hotel, the office was deserted, with the exception of the night clerk, and two well-dressed, respectable looking young men, whom at a passing glance, he took for guests of the house, and so paid no further attention to them.

He went to the office, got his key, and was about to pass up-stairs when he felt a tap on the shoulder, and turning, found himself confronted by these two men.

"You will excuse me, sir," one of them said, "but your name is Richard Bristol, is it not?"

"That's about the size of it," Dick replied, suspecting what was coming.

"Ah! yes, just so. You are acquainted with a gentleman named Don Juan Mellique, are you not?"

"I've met the character, on several occasions!"

"Yes. Well, Mr. Bristol, I have an unpleasant duty to perform—something I have never done before, and quite distasteful to me. But you know these little difficulties—"

"Bah! why dodge around the corner?" interrupted Dick. "You have a challenge for me, eh?"

"Well, yes, Don Juan feels that you have grossly wronged him, and thinks the most gentlemanly way to gain satisfaction for his wounded feelings would be by meeting you in the *duelillo*!"

"Well, I've no objections. When does he want to fight, sir?"

JNA

"In the morning, at sunrise."

"Any particular place?"

"There is a little grove half a mile out of town, where such things take place—on the south trail."

"Oh! well, that will do. I suppose I have the choice of weapons?"

"I believe it is customary to give the challenged party the choice."

"Yes, invariably. I will choose revolvers, at thirty paces. Tell the Don I will be on deck, and give him all the satisfaction he may desire."

"Have you a second, Mr. Bristol?"

"Not as yet."

"Well, I am going to act for Don Juan, and I brought this gentleman along, thinking perhaps that you, being a stranger here, might want to accept his services."

"Thank you. But I prefer to make my own selection."

"Very well. Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

The challenge-bearers then left the hotel, while Dick sought his room.

"So they're hot after me, are they?" he muttered.

"Well, let 'em come! I'll clean out the whole crowd. Doubtless Don Pedro has told Juan about my heritage, and the latter thinks it will better his chances to get me out of the way. Let him keep on thinking so. 'We shall see,' said the blind man!"

After cleaning up one of his pistols, which was best for dueling purposes, Dick went to bed and slept soundly until daybreak. The thought of the impending duel did not disturb his slumbers in the least.

After a hearty breakfast, he had his horse brought around from the stable, saddled and ready for the trail.

"Where now, Cap?" asked Jim Burns, the jolly young proprietor of The Planter's.

"Off to fight a duel," Dick replied vaulting into the saddle.

"The thunder you say! Who are you goin' to fight?"

"Don Juan Mellique."

"Ye don't say! Why, that cuss can't fight!"

"That's none of my mince-meat. He challenged me."

"Did, eh? Where's yer second?"

"Haven't got one."

"Sho'! Why, I wouldn't think of fighting that treacherous cuss, without a second. He'll do you, sure. Say, what d'ye say ter me?"

"Should be glad to have your assistance, sir."

"Then, just wait 'til I git my horse, an' I'm yer dusenberry. An' if there's any monkey-biz'ness, I'll be thar! I kin jest shoot the freckles off thar moon, an' don't ye fergit it." And Burns darted away toward the stable, at a hop-skip-and-a-jump.

Dick was not sorry of the chance to have a good second, although he would not have hesitated to enter the battle without one.

He and Burns were soon riding away together, and reached the dueling ground, shortly after sunrise.

None of the Mellique party had yet arrived, and it was full an hour, ere they rode upon the spot.

Don Juan was attired with scrupulous neatness; a sneering expression was upon his sinister face.

"I suppose you thought you'd get off, eh?" he said, as he dismounted near where Dick was standing.

"Well, yes, I thought I'd dismount, not knowing you wished to fight on horseback," was Dick's rejoinder, given with sarcasm.

"Oh, you needn't be so funny!" Juan growled. "It won't avail you anything. I'm going to kill you. No one ever crossed Juan Mellique and lived to brag of it!"

"No? Well, that's jolly! So you're going to do me up real brown, are you? That's nice! When I do get done up I want it brown."

Juan made no reply.

His second and Don Pedro had accompanied him.

No time was lost in getting down to business.

The thirty paces were staked off, and the two men took their positions at the goals.

Burns and the other second occupied places half the distance between the two duelists, on either side of the line over which the bullets were to pass.

Don Pedro, for some unexplainable reason had taken up a position a little behind, and a few feet to the right of Deadwood Dick.

Whether it was to keep out of the range of Dick's revolver or not, is hard to say.

"Now, gents," said Burns, pulling out his revolver. "this has got ter be a squar', bona-fide funeral, an' no monkey-bizness. Ther feller as don't go accordin' ter ther rules o' Hoyle, will catch somethin' that sounds somewhat like Hoyle an' ther same will come right out o' this funeral-dispenser of mine. So take heed an' don't be heedless."

"Aire this ter be to ther death, or to a sort of a wheel-barrow funeral?"

"It is to the death!" Don Juan cried, fiercely. "And yonder stands the scoundrel who goes down."

"Don't be too sure, sonny," Burns suggested; "fer ye ken't tell how hard a cro'bar can hit, 'til ye git basted with one. The order of the hour is to continue to fire until one or t'other sucks in his last whiff of oxygen?"

"Not much!" quickly cried Juan. "But one shot is to be fired, apiece. If I don't kill my man in one, the duel is over."

"All right! Git ready, an' when I yell *three*, let 'er go, Smith!"

The opponents raised their weapons, and took deliberate aim.

The face of each man wore a determined expression.

"One!" counted Burns.

"Two!"

"Three!"

Bang! bang!

Two yells went up; yells of human agony.

One from Don Juan, who staggered but did not fall; the other from Don Pedro, who fell to the ground, shot through the heart by his own nephew's bullet!

As for Deadwood Dick, he stood unharmed!

CHAPTER VIII.

SYKES THE TRAITOR.

YES, the shot fired by Don Juan, and intended for Deadwood Dick, Jr., had gone wide enough of its mark to strike Don Pedro, and send him to toe earth.

He never moved after falling; the bullet had done its work most effectually. Pedro Mellique was dead ere the others of the dueling scene could reach his side.

Juan Mellique's right arm hung limp and useless by his side, and his face was very pale, as he gazed down at the man he had killed.

"Waal, sir," said Jim Burns, rising from beside the body, "ye said you'd kill yer man with one bullet, Juan Mellique, an' you've did it, but you killed the wrong man, though. You are a murderer!"

"I am no murderer!" Juan replied, haughtily. "It was pure accident that my bullet struck my uncle. There must be a flaw in the barrel of my revolver, which is a new one I purchased this morning. Of course I am deeply grieved to know that I am the cause of my uncle's death, but, as I did not shoot him intentionally, I cannot see as I am to blame."

"Waal, it's yer own mutton, not mine. Dunno how the folks at Sante Fe will look at it, though. Hey ye got enough satisfaction?"

"I have," the Don replied; then turning to Deadwood Dick, "and as for you, sir, permit me to offer you an apology, and to assure you that it is my hope that in the future we be not enemies."

"Very well," Dick returned, with a bow; then, putting up his revolver, he turned to Burns. "We might as well be going, had we not?"

"I reckon," the landlord replied.

And so they mounted and rode away, leaving Juan and his second to look after the dead Don.

"Waal, ye come out without a scratch," Burns said, with a chuckle.

"I generally do," Dick declared, with a smile. "I've been in a good many scrapes, but always managed to get out whole."

"What did ye think o' the Don's shot?"

Dick shrugged his shoulders.

"It might have been an accident, and it might not," he replied. "Don Pedro was quite rich, I believe, and Juan seemed to be quite a favorite of his. There are many strange things happen nowadays, especially where there's any money at stake."

"Darn my skin ef ye ain't right thar. An' what d'ye think of the Don's apology to ye?"

"Bah! that was merely a blind, intended to put me off my guard. For certain reasons, he hates me with a deadly hatred, and would try to murder me openly, if he dared. He is a treacherous snake, and I have not a doubt but that he will seek to put me out of the way. But let him try it. I'll be on my guard. If I should turn up missing, you can safely lay my disappearance to Don Juan Mellique!"

"All right. Jim Burns is the chap as won't forget that aire fact. An' there'll be ructions raised in Santa Fe, if you ain't found."

When they arrived in the city, Dick stabled his horse, and then made his way toward the Mellique residence.

When he drew near the place, he watched a favorable opportunity, and entered the grounds by a rear gate, and making his way to where he had buried the tin box, he dug it up, which done, he hastened to leave the grounds, but before he could do so, he came suddenly face to face with Myra Mellique, the Don's daughter.

A pretty girl was Myra, of the blonde type, and she was as charming of manner as she was pretty.

"Why, good-morning, Mr. Bristol!" she said, cordially, at the same time putting out her hand. "It is an unexpected pleasure to meet you here. Were you at the house?"

"No. I was just looking for a letter I lost," fibbed Dick, not knowing what else to say.

"Oh! And can't you find it?"

"No. I don't think on the whole I lost it here."

"Mr. Bristol, what was the matter between you and papa, that caused you to leave the house?"

"Oh! nothing serious. He accused me of being concerned in the disappearance of Donna Nola, and not liking that very much, I concluded to change quarters."

"Do you know where Nola is?"

"I prefer not to answer that question, Donna."

"Oh! it don't matter. I am not particularly concerned, more than that I'd just as lief have her keep away."

"Indeed? Why is that?"

"I should then have a better chance to win Juan for myself!"

"Ah! then you want Juan, eh?"

"Well—yes."

"Then, set your heart at rest that Nola won't trouble you. If you can win Juan, go in and do it. Rest assured that Nola will not interrupt your wooing."

"Thank you for that assurance!"

"Not at all. Good-morning!"

"Good-morning. Call and see me, sometime."

"Perhaps I will."

Then Dick took his departure.

He had refrained from telling the Donna of her father's death, for he knew a hysterical scene would follow, and he had no particular wish, just then, for such a scene.

He made his way back to the hotel, and there met Simeon Sykes, the Del Norte lawyer.

This Sykes was a little, withered-up, spindly-shanked individual, with a homely phiz, little peering eyes, and yellowish hair.

"Ah! that you, Sykes? You're just the man I want to see," Dick said, shaking him by the hand. "When did you return?"

"Only a little while ago. How are things?"

"Oh! fair. I'm ready, now and, we will go at once and prove the will, and have it recorded. Then you will be at liberty to return to Del Norte as soon as you like."

"I don't think I shall return there," Sykes replied. "I rather like this place, and if you pay me a fair price for my services, I shall, without doubt, locate here."

"Very well. Let's go, now, and attend to the will. After that is done, I intend to take a trip to The Turrets, and see what sort of a place my castle is."

"You will not go alone?"

"Yes, unless you desire to accompany me."

"That I should like to do, sir, for I have heard so much about the place that, really, I am curious to see it."

"Very well. I will be glad of your company."

They sought the register's office, and likewise the surrogate's but found that both of those gentlemen were out of town, and nothing could be done toward legalizing the will until their return on the morrow.

Dick, however, left the will at the surrogate's office until the proper time should come for proving it.

He then returned to the hotel, for it was not his intention to start for The Turrets until after dinner.

Early in the forenoon, the dead body of Pedro Mellique was brought back to town. Then the story of the duel leaked out, and the excitement became intense. As in all cases, there were two sides to the story; but it chanced that Jim Burns of The Planter's was popular all over Santa Fe, and he spared no pains to have it understood that Dick was in no wise to blame for the shooting, and that Juan Mellique was.

Many and significant were the expressions of

the people in regard to the tragedy, and not the least of these were uttered to the discredit of Don Juan.

He kept himself pretty well out of sight during the forenoon, but about noon he made his appearance on the street with his arm in a sling, and carried himself with an air of total indifference as to what the people might say or think.

Among others of his usual haunts was the Bijou Club, a gaming-saloon patronized pretty exclusively by the young bloods of the city; and thither he made his way.

It was a gaudily-furnished place, fitted up with a bar, chairs and tables, and costly pictures and mirrors, and many other appurtenances calculated to be pleasing to the eye of the sporting man, the array of bar-fixings being especially attractive.

But few persons were in the saloon when Don Juan entered, and these he was not intimately acquainted with; so he seated himself at a table and lit a cigar, at which he puffed away leisurely.

That he expected some one to meet him was evident, for he glanced frequently in the direction of the door.

Some ten minutes after he was seated, Simeon Sykes walked into the saloon and seated himself across the table from the Don, who nodded familiarly.

"Well, I see you are on time," he said, glancing at his watch.

"Yes, I always try to be," Sykes replied.

"And I see that you are winged."

"Curse it, yes! The duel resulted disastrously, not only for me, but for my uncle, who was killed."

"I don't suppose your sorrow is deep," remarked the lawyer, with a shrug of his shoulders. "I believe you hinted to me once that his will was drawn in your favor?"

"Sh! Breathe no word of any such thing for other ears to hear. The tide of public opinion is already stronger against me than I care to know. But, tell me—have you any news?"

"Yes. After I left you, after telling you of the interview between Bristol and Donna Nola in the arbor, I made it my business to hunt up the house of the preacher, Salem. I had little difficulty in finding it, and by listening at the door, I found that the Donna was indeed there. Believing that Deadwood Dick would visit the place before morning, I hung about the neighborhood, and at last was rewarded by seeing him approach and enter the house. I then took up my position at the door, and applied my ear at the keyhole. Thus I remained until I heard Dick about to leave the place, when I was forced to sneak away."

"Sykes, you're a brick! Here is a hundred for you, in payment for your services so far. Go on, and tell me all."

"I'm afeard it won't be very pleasant news for you, sir, but I'll tell it. The Salems welcomed Bristol; then they chatted a while, and among other things, the preacher told Deadwood Dick the story of The Turrets and the nondescript."

"Ah! What did the adventurer say?"

"He expressed a good deal of interest, and declared he should take up his abode at The Turrets within a few days."

"We'll see about that!" Don Juan declared, with an oath. "One thing is certain. That Yankee upstart will never rule at The Turrets. But, go on. What else?"

"Well, after Salem had finished his narration, Nola and Dick stood up and the preacher married them."

"What?"

The Don leaped to his feet, his eyes fairly blazing with anger.

"Just as I have told you," Sykes assured, coolly. "I heard Salem ask the usual questions, heard the affirmative answers given, and heard the preacher pronounce them man and wife!"

"Ten thousand furies! Why did you not come and tell me this at once?"

"The house was dark when I returned from the trip to Salem's."

Don Juan sank back upon his seat, inflamed with rage.

"Curses upon that Yankee loafer!" he hissed. "If this be true, it is likely to knock all my plans in the head. But tell me what name the girl was married under?"

"Nola Norris."

"Furies! her own true name. How did she ever learn it? If the preacher is ordained with ministerial powers, the marriage is legal. Had she married under the name of Mellique—"

"It would have been legal, just the same.

Marriage under an assumed name does not make it invalid, by any means."

"Then this Deadwood Dick must die, and at once, before the news of the marriage leaks out. With him out of the way, I can force Nola into submission to my will—ay, I will do it, even if I have to use force! Who holds the marriage certificate, Sykes?"

"I do not know. The girl, most likely."

"I doubt it. This Bristol is a shrewd devil, and more's the probability he has it on his person. Sykes, I must set to work at once, and you must help me."

"How can I help you? What do you want me to do?"

"Help me put this man out of the way."

"Nary! I want no murder on my hands."

"Not even if you are paid well?"

"Not for the world!"

"Well, perhaps we can arrange it so he need not be killed. If he can be imprisoned, why, I can coerce him to terms that will force him to leave the country; and that done, I can induce Donna Nola to become my wife."

"Well, in case there's no murder I don't mind giving you a lending hand, providing, of course, you are willing to pay me well for my services."

"Very well. Help me to get rid of Dick Bristol, and I will pay you any reasonable price. Besides, I will employ you to assist in settling up my uncle's estate, and altogether, you can make a snug little sum of money."

"Then, I'm your man. I've been down to hard-pan for nigh two years, and I can't let a chance slip me to turn an honest penny. I am not quite so scrupulous as I might be had fortune smiled upon me earlier in life."

"Of course not. It does not pay men to be too scrupulous in this present age. But, tell me, has Bristol yet taken any steps toward settling the matters in regard to the will?"

"Yes. We went together this morning, to fix up things, but neither the surrogate nor the registrar were in town, thanks to the telegrams I had sent them from Santa Rosa. So Dick left the will at the surrogate's office for safe-keeping until to-morrow."

"By heaven! then he must never call for it, and 'The Turrets' is still mine! How can it be arranged, Sykes? We must work while there is time."

"I think I have a plan," Sykes replied, and then, bending closer to the Don, he spoke low and earnestly.

When he had finished the Don arose.

His face was flushed, his eyes gleamed wickedly, and his whole expression was triumphant.

"The very thing," he declared. "Do as you have outlined, Simeon Sykes, and I will make you a rich man!"

CHAPTER IX. THE DON'S REVENGE.

THAT afternoon, armed with directions how to find the place, Deadwood Dick, Junior, and Sykes set out for a visit to "The Turrets."

They were well mounted, and equipped with everything necessary to make an exploration of the weird old mountain chateau safe and easy.

Before starting Dick had paid a stealthy visit to Nola, at the home of the Salems, and made known his proposed journey.

Nola was delighted to see him, and so were the good minister and his family, but all expressed great anxiety when he made known his proposed trip to 'The Turrets.'

"Oh, Dick!" Nola said, clinging to him fondly, "don't go. I am so afraid something will happen—that some terrible harm will befall you. Don't go, for my sake."

"For your sake, my bonny bride, I would do almost anything; but you must not try to deter me from this visit to our future home, for I want to see it, before taking you there, my jewel. I am well armed, and mean to solve the mystery of the place, if mystery there be. So quiet all fears, and watch for my return, for when I do, I shall openly announce you as my wife."

"Oh, how brave and good you are, Richard, and I am so very happy in your love. If I should lose you, it would kill me, and I feel now as if I shall never see you again!"

"Such fears are unworthy of the nugget of good sense that nestles in your sunny little head, my pet; so cheer up, and you will see me back at ten to-morrow, or at noon at the latest."

"Be careful, my son!" Mr. Salem adjured, shaking his head dubiously. "'The Turrets' has an ominous repute, and you know not what evils may be lurking there!"

"Pshaw! I fear not," Dick replied, with a light laugh. "If any evils exist I'll soon run

them out, and, in another week, 'The Turrets' shall be transformed into a fairy palace. Take good care of my bride until my return, good sir, and, above all, preserve the marriage certificate!"

"Thy bride shall be tenderly cared for, sir, and as for the certificate it is already consigned to a place of security."

"Very good, and may the Good Father reward you! And, now, Nola," said Dick, turning to his bride, "here is what money I have. I wish to leave it in your care until my return, so that if anything should happen to me, you will be provided for, for a time at least. There is twenty thousand dollars, part of which belonged to Don Jose Mellique before his death, and the balance to me. Keep it, as I shall have no use for money during my absence. These papers you may also retain, for, though of no real important value, they are things I would prefer not to lose."

"Oh! then, you know you are going into danger, Dick!" Nola cried, clinging to him, pleadingly. "Please do not go and leave me! Or, at least, if you will go, let me accompany you."

"Such a thing is not to be thought of, Nola, dearest," Dick replied. "So, quiet all fears, for I will surely return to-morrow safe and sound as a dollar. Good by, now, and don't worry the least, for I am amply able to take care of myself."

And kissing her, and shaking hands with the Salems, Dick took his departure; and a short time afterward he and Sykes rode out of Santa Fe, *en route* for "The Turrets," which lay several leagues to the northeast of the new Mexican metropolis, up in the great mountain fastnesses.

But, as they were mounted upon spirited horses, Dick calculated they could reach the end of their destination long before sunset.

Armed with a compass and full directions, he had little fear but what they could find the lone residence; so both galloped swiftly along, and but few words were interchanged, each man seeming more or less absorbed in his own thoughts.

The horses covered space rapidly, and ere mid-afternoon entered the mountains. The way was now more rugged and the journey necessarily made in slower time. Nevertheless, it was not yet sunset, when, after toiling up rugged and dangerous trails, they came suddenly out upon a level aerial plateau, from whence, a short distance below them, they could see "The Turrets," as it rested among the crags in all its solemn grandeur.

Like some citadel of medieval days it appeared to the two horsemen, and they drew rein and surveyed the picture for several minutes in silence.

Gray and ghostly looked the massive and irregular pile of granite, and the turrets that reared their heads toward the heavens, looked like so many grim sentinels. To add to the awesome effect of the surroundings, were the steep mountain-sides, with their densely matted forests.

"'Tis a picture for a master artist's brush!" Dick exclaimed, admiringly.

"It reminds me more of a sepulcher for the dead," Sykes grunted, with a shrug of the shoulders. "Whoever built the place must have had the chronic blues."

"Pshaw! The place is simply grand!" Dick replied—"a very castle in a kingless country. Come! let's move on."

They had only a slight grade to descend, when they came to another table-land or plateau, upon which opened the main entrance to the chateau, if such it might be termed.

This main entrance, was a great hall with arched portico, and guarded by two ponderous doors, one of which stood ajar.

Dick and Sykes at once dismounted, and tethered out their horses; then they made preparations to invade the place of mystery.

Lanterns were lit, revolvers drawn, and, for the first time in their lives, they set foot in the great main hall.

It was very wide, and the ceiling was far above them. Everything was stone—the floor, the walls, the ceiling. Nowhere was a piece of wood to be seen.

From the main hall branched off numerous other passages, and off these passages opened doors leading to the various apartments.

Fully two hours were consumed in rapid exploration of the first floor of The Turrets. By this time the shades of night were gathering thick and fast, without the chateau.

Each room visited had been well furnished, but, as Mr. Salem had surmised, the furniture was in bad condition, being worm-eaten, moth-eaten, and generally useless. Some of it, to be

sure, had not suffered the ravages of time, but, what was originally worth perhaps ten thousand dollars, was now worth scarcely a tenth of that amount.

Another thing, as the minister had outlined, were the strange and varying currents of air that swept through the halls—now warm, then chilling cold.

After exploring the first floor, the upper portions of the chateau were visited, and it was near midnight ere every niche and nook had been examined, to Dick's satisfaction.

Only certain rooms of the upper portion of the building were furnished, but the furniture was in a much better condition than that below stairs.

Altogether, Dick found that he could pick out a great plenty to furnish up in cosey shape, what apartments he and Nola should need.

After finishing the exploration of the upper part of the building, he and Sykes returned to the grand parlor, on the ground floor.

"Well, so far, so good," Dick said. "We've seen no *Man-Dragon*, as yet, and if one exists he's taken good care to keep out of our way."

"Well, I'm glad of it," Sykes replied. "I'm clean tired out trotting about this old rookery."

"Pshaw! you've no fun in you, at all. I don't intend to give in until I've explored the infernal regions in under this place. However we will rest a few minutes, before we proceed further."

"Why not wait till morning?" Sykes growled.

"Because, I wish to start back for Santa Fe, in the morning," was the reply. "The will must be proved and recorded, to-morrow, by all means."

Sykes made no reply, but there was a strange gleam in his little sharp eyes that the detective did not notice.

After half an hour's rest, Dick arose.

"Well, come along," he said. "It won't take us long to do the down-stairs part, and then we'll have the rest of the night for sleep."

"No sleep for me in this place!" Sykes protested. Then, he leaped quickly to his feet, crying:

"Look behind you, quick! *The Man-Dragon!*

Dick wheeled like a flash, facing the door. It was a fatal action on his part, for on the instant, he was conscious of receiving a terrible blow upon the head; then his senses left him, and he knew no more.

When he returned to consciousness, he found himself still in the parlor, but lying flat on his back. The lantern yet on the table, gave forth light enough for him to see that he was alone.

Not only alone, but he was securely bound hand and foot.

There was no one in the room. Silence was everywhere.

For some time, Dick was at loss how to account for his position, but, finally, reason came back to him, and he remembered the blow.

But where was the person who had assaulted him?

"Sykes is a traitor," he mused, "and his offer to accompany me here, was but part of a scheme to entrap me. I see it all, now, and I am fairly in the power of Juan Mellique. Heaven help poor Nola."

For upward of half an hour, he lay thus, until he had clearly collected his senses; then he struggled to a sitting posture.

Hardly had he attained this attitude, when he heard footsteps approaching, and in a few seconds, Don Juan Mellique entered the room.

His face wore an expression of gloating triumph, as he approached the captive, and paused just in front of him.

"Ho! ho! So you are not quite so frisky as usual, I see, dog of a Yankee!" he cried, sneeringly. "You begin to realize, I trust, what it means to incur the displeasure of a Mellique!"

"Bah! I fear you not, were you a dozen times a Mellique!" Dick replied, "and if I ever get rid of these bonds, I'll make you wish you were never born!"

The Don laughed, tauntingly.

"Well, let me set your heart at rest on that score," he replied. "You will never get rid of those bonds, until you are safe in one of the dungeons beneath this building, where you will spend the remainder of your days, in peace if not in plenty. I have got everything arranged for your disposal, and have to assure you that you have looked for the last time upon the light of the outer world."

"Beneath this place, far below the surface of the earth, are many mysterious passages, leading to underground dungeons. One of these dungeons, which is more hard to reach than any of the others, will be your future home."

"You stole my affianced bride away from

me, but it will be only in name, as I shall destroy all proofs of your marriage, and force the Donna Nola to become mine. 'The Turrets' shall also be mine, and while you are rolling in the dungeon, underneath, I shall be reigning like a prince, over your head. Ha! ha! revenge is sweet—revenge is sweet, indeed! How like you the prospectus, you dog of a Yankee, who dared to cross my track?"

"You infernal whelp, I command you to release me," Dick cried, struggling to burst asunder the thongs that bound him. "Release me, I say, or by heaven, I'll have no mercy on you when I do get free!"

"Pah! There is not the slightest possibility of your ever getting free. The dungeon I have prepared for your reception is hewn out of solid rock, and guarded by an iron door, of which I am alone the possessor of the key. Once you are locked within that cell, you are forever doomed to live on a diet of bread and water, and dwell in eternal darkness. Ah! here comes my trusty assistant now!"

Simeon Sykes it was who entered the parlor.

There was a sneering smile upon his face, as he gazed down at Deadwood Dick, but he refrained from speaking.

"Well, Sykes, is the dungeon all in readiness?" the Don asked.

"It is, sir. I fixed it up as comfortably as I could, with what things I had at my command, and I reckon the place is good enough for any prisoner to live in."

"Very well. It is no doubt good enough for the one who is going to occupy it. Search the prisoner now, Sykes, and then we'll take him below. Deprive him of everything in his pockets, and if you find the marriage-certificate, give it to me."

Sykes obeyed the order, but found but little in Dick's pockets.

"No certificate," he at length announced, rising to his feet.

"Where is the document?" the Don demanded, glaring down at Dick fiercely. "What have you done with the document?"

"I haven't got it!" Dick replied, composedly.

"Who has got it, then?"

"That's emphatically none of your business!"

"Ain't it? Well, we shall see. You tell me what has become of the certificate, or I'll put a bullet straight through your heart."

"Put away!" Dick replied. "I would prefer death to the imprisonment you have promised me!"

"Oh! no doubt but what you would. But, as it happens, I prefer to have you live, that you may feel the full scope of my vengeance. When Donna Nola has become my bride, I will perhaps introduce her to you, in your subterranean boudoir. Seize hold of him, Sykes, and help to drag him down to his den!"

Then the two villains grasped Dick by either arm and dragged him from the parlor, Sykes carrying the lantern in his left hand.

Out into the main hall, then through various passages, thence down flights of dusty stairs, and through more passages, they dragged their victim, until it seemed they must have reached the very bowels of the earth.

Finally they came to a halt in front of a gloomy opening in the solid rock, the entrance to the dungeon wherein Dick was to be imured.

Into this dank and gloomy hole in the rock the detective was pulled: then the grated iron door clanged shut, and the key turned in the lock with an ominous click.

"There you are, you Yankee dog!" cried Don Juan in triumphant tones, "and there you will stay until you die. Once each day you will be served with a bowl of water and a crust of bread, unless you prove a refractory patient; then, all rations will be stopped. After Nola becomes my bride, I may conclude to be lenient, and give you your liberty, providing you swear to leave the country for good. But, until then, you remain where you are!"

"If I ever get free, I will have your life, you hell-hound!" Dick cried, fiercely. "So, you had best tremble in fear of the day when I shall get my liberty!"

"No fear of your ever getting free, then!" the Don retorted, with a savage laugh. "You will find in me a merciless jailer. So, prepare to make the best of your situation, and resign yourself to the fate your foolhardiness and insolence have brought upon yourself!"

With a heartless laugh, the villain continued:

"If you will thrust your hands through the opening between the grates, Sykes will remove the cords from about your wrist, so that you can unbind yourself, and have the freedom of your cell."

Dick complied with this intimation, and after his hands were freed, the Don said:

"Now, good-by! I may not see you for some little time, but Sykes will bring you enough bread to keep the breath of life in you. Take care of yourself, and devote your spare time to guessing how old you will be when you leave this place!"

"Go! you detestable wretch!" cried Dick, fiercely, "and take with you my everlasting curse!"

The only reply was a mocking laugh; then both Sykes and the Don hurried away, and Dick was left alone to his fate—alone, in Stygian darkness, and in solitude profound.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE LIBRARY.

THE next day Don Juan returned to Santa Fe, but Sykes remained behind, at "The Turrets," to keep an eye out lest some one should seek to find and rescue Deadwood Dick.

The Don had promised him large pay, and as the lawyer was, as we have seen, impecunious, he proposed to make the best of the offered opportunity to fatten his pocket-book.

It was the day set for Don Pedro's funeral, and so Juan had plenty on hand to occupy his attention.

The funeral took place in the afternoon, and was largely attended, but Juan was not among the mourners. Report had it that he was confined to his bed, prostrated with grief, but the truth was, the Don was locked in his dead uncle's library, from actual fear of being conspicuous in public, lest there be an uprising among the indignant citizens, and he be arrested.

Then, too, the absence of the family from the house, at the funeral, gave him a much wished-for opportunity to go rummaging through the late Don's desk and private papers, in advance of any one else.

Whether or not Don Pedro had left a will, he was not certain, and it was a matter of considerable anxiety to him, for he had strong expectations of coming in for a large portion of the Mellique fortune, if, indeed, not all of it, for he had always been full as much a favorite with the Don, as had Myra or Nola.

But if it should turn out that Pedro had not left a will, then the fortune of course would go to Myra, and he, Juan, would be "left," and his calculations sadly shattered.

In this case, he was fully resolved what he would do. Not to be baffled, he would employ his new tool, Simeon Sykes, to draw up a will, in his favor, and thus sweep everything before him.

Hence it was that, ere the funeral cortège had left the house, Don Juan was locked in his late uncle's private library, prepared to make a thorough search of the place, in quest of a will.

Don Pedro had been a thorough business man, and his library was furnished with all conveniences requisite for the rapid and easy transaction of business, and having a strong distrust of banking institutions he kept his money in a large time-lock safe, of Eastern manufacture.

The first thing Juan tried to do, on locking himself in the library, was to open this safe, but he found, to his chagrin, that it could not be done, until the following morning.

"Curses seize the safe!" he growled. "If I could only get into it, now, I could appropriate part of the money, without any one's being the wiser for it. I must contrive to be here when the safe unlocks, at nine, to-morrow!"

As there was nothing to be hoped for, for the present, so far as the safe was concerned, he turned his attention to the desks and drawers, and began to rummage through them minutely, and scanning the various documents with which the pigeon-holes were stuffed.

So much was there of this matter, that time flew faster than he had any idea of; still he searched on, impatiently in hopes of finding something of the sought-for last will and testament.

"I reckon it's no use," he growled, at last. "There's no will among these papers. If uncle left one at all, he most likely put it away in his safe, along with his money. Confound it, if I could only get into the safe, I'd be all right, I presume. Ha!"

This exclamation was caused by a sudden discovery.

In rummaging about one of the desks, he had accidentally touched a secret spring, and what had hitherto appeared to be but a panel shot to one side, exposing to view a tiny pigeon-hole, in which were several papers.

"The will, at last, I'll wager!" he cried, seizing the papers, eagerly. "Yes, sure enough,

here it is: Last Will and Testament of Pedro Mellique, and dated but a month ago. Hello! what's this? 'Confession of a crime, by Pedro Mellique.' By the heavens, I never knew that my uncle was a criminal. I must look into this matter. Perhaps the confession is something regarding the early history of Nola!"

"Whether it is, or is not, you will oblige me by handing me over the confession, and also the will!"

"What! Myra's voice?" and Don Juan wheeled around as if thunderstruck.

Yes! It was Myra.

The library door was open, and Myra stood in the middle of the room, looking pale, almost ghostly, in her mourning attire.

In her right hand, she clutched a revolver, which was leveled full at Don Juan, and was cocked, ready for instant use.

The Don uttered an imprecation, as he saw her, and the expression of resolution that gleamed from her tear-reddened eyes.

The surprise was most unexpected.

"Why, Myra, is it you?" he said. "What's the matter with you? Put down that weapon. It might go off!"

"It will go off, too, unless you hand me over those papers you hold in your hand," was the reply. "I surprised you, did I? And so I meant. I played off sick, at the church, and hastened home, to find my poor father's murderer playing thief! Oh! you wretch! I've a mind to shoot you down in your tracks!"

"Put away that revolver, and don't be a fool, or it will be the worse for you!" Juan cried, angrily. "Dye hear?"

"I hear but I don't heed!" was the retort. "I mean business, Juan Mellique, and you'll have a painful realization of it, if you don't hand me those papers. I'm in no mood for trifling. Hand me those papers!"

"Curse you, they are nothing to you. They are mine!"

"Hand me those papers—twice!"

Don Juan looked viciously, and still hesitated.

"Hand me those papers! third and last time!" fairly screamed Myra.

This time Juan dared not refuse, and with an oath he hurled the documents on the floor, at her feet.

Keeping her weapon in hand, ready for instant use, Myra first picked up the will, and proceeded to examine it.

Juan watched her, like a lynx, expecting by the expression of her countenance, to divine the contents of the document; but he was disappointed, for he could not see that she was in the least surprised.

"Well," he demanded, interrogatively, "what bequests did your father make?"

"It does not bequeath anything to you, sir, except on conditions!" Myra said, haughtily.

"Ah! On conditions, eh?"

"Yes, on conditions."

"And what are these conditions?" Juan demanded, eagerly.

"They are, that you honor the promise you once made me, Juan Mellique—the promise you dishonorably broke for the sake of my foster-sister!"

"You mean for me to marry you?" he sneered.

"That is precisely what I mean. When you keep the promise you made, to marry me, I will give you one half of my father's money and landed property. Refuse, and you get not a cent!"

"Bah! You can't work that game on me! I'll not believe your father disinherited me until I see the will. And as for marrying you, that is out of the question. There's but one person in the world whom I will marry and she is Nola."

Myra laughed, sarcastically.

"You'll never marry her!" she declared. "She's gone with the man of her choice, and he's just the one to take care of her!"

"Pshaw! I know better. I can lay my hand on Nola's shoulder, within ten minutes, and as for that scoundrel, Bristol, he'll never cross my path, or interfere with my love affairs, again!"

"Ah! You brag of that, do you? Then you have murdered him!"

"Well, I reckon not. However, I have brought influence enough to bear to induce him to quit the country. I have the field all open before me, now, and Nola shall be mine, in spite of anybody or anything!"

Myra's dusky eyes scintillated angrily, as she heard this heartless declaration, and she shook the revolver at Don Juan, menacingly.

"We shall see!" she retorted. "You have dared to break faith with me, Juan Mellique, and to spurn my love. Now I hate, loathe and despise you, and you can count upon me as your

bitter enemy. 'Tis said that hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, and even so will the saying hold good, in my case. Nola shall never be your wife. She is too pure and innocent to become the wife of such a leper as you. As a sister I love her, but she shall never come between you and me!"

"Bah! how will you help yourself?" he sneered.

"How will I help myself, Juan Mellique? Why, before I'll see her your wife, with my own hands I'll murder you!" she cried.

He glared at her a moment, perfectly furious with rage, then, with a vengeful cry, he bounded forward, and bore her to the floor, at the same time wrenching the pistol from her grasp.

Then, the gleam of a madman in his eyes, he clutched her throat and choked her until she ceased to struggle, and lay like one dead.

Seizing the papers, he regained his feet, put on his hat, and rushed from the house, as if pursued by Satan and all his demons!

CHAPTER XI.

BASER THAN THE BASEST.

NOLA passed a restless night, the one following Dick's departure for "The Turrets" being troubled by gravest fears for her husband's safety.

Prior to the hour for retiring the Salems tried their best to cheer her up and cause her to cast aside all apprehensions, but they ill succeeded, for she could not dismiss from her mind the belief that Dick was in danger.

After retiring, she could not sleep, and soon got up and paced the floor all night long—a fearful bridal night's vigil.

It was a great relief when day once more dawned, and long ere the forenoon had half-advanced she began to watch expectantly for Dick's return.

But, the forenoon passed, and the sun reached the meridian; still no Dick appeared.

"Don't worry, deary," Mrs. Salem said, soothingly, as, with a sigh, Nola turned away from her patient watch at the window. "It is quite a distance to 'The Turrets,' and your husband no doubt overrated the time it would take to accomplish the journey. Rest assured he will return all in good time."

"No! no! I cannot believe it!" Nola replied. "I cannot believe that he will ever come back to me alive. I am haunted by some terrible premonition of coming trouble. I seem to feel that a gulf yawns between me and Dick, which can never be bridged. Oh! Mrs. Salem, if he should prove false to me, it would surely kill me. Oh! I know it would kill me!"

"Tut! tut! my dear young lady, for you do your husband an injustice to believe he would be so base!" Mr. Salem spoke up.

While his good wife echoed his words.

"Oh! I only hope I do! I hope I do! But, try as hard as I will, I cannot shake off this feeling that something is about to happen tha will change the whole future course of my life."

"Try and think differently, my dear; you've kept worrying until you have worked yourself all into a fever of excitement. Be patient a little while longer, and if he is not returned by that time I will go and see what I can learn in regard to the matter," declared the minister.

"Oh, thank you, sir. You are both very kind to me; and if he should never return, will you let me make my future home with you, the same as if I were your daughter? I have all this money he left me, and it will be sufficient to provide a comfortable home for us for a very long time."

"To be sure you should remain with us, my dear, in case there should be such a thing as a confirmation of your fears. But, of course, such a thing is not worthy of a thought."

But, despite all this reassurance, Nola refused to be comforted, and was literally as restless as a caged bird.

At last it came four o'clock, and still no Deadwood Dick had put in an appearance.

Mr. Salem now began to show some symptoms of anxiety, and at Nola's pleading consented to go forth and see if he could learn anything in regard to whether Dick had returned to town or not.

He had not been gone long when Mrs. Salem uttered an exclamation of surprise that quickly brought Nola to her side.

"Why, look here," the good woman said; "some one has shoved this under the door. Good stars! and it's addressed to you, too, child!"

With a faint cry of alarm Nola snatched from Mrs. Salem's hand the enveloped letter, which had been found thrust in under the door, and tore away the wrapper.

Eagerly she scanned the first few lines; then,

uttering a piteous moan, she reeled and fell to the floor in a dead swoon.

Nearly distracted at this occurrence, Mrs. Salem lifted the stricken form and deposited her on the sofa. Then, rushed for the letter, to learn what was the matter.

What she read was written in a masculine hand, and ran as follows:

"SANTA FE, September 10, 18—.

"DEAREST NOLA:—I have just returned from 'The Turrets' to make one of the most alarming discoveries of my life. It comes in the shape of a letter from one I have long believed dead—from my first wife, whom I believed to have been killed by the Indians, over a year ago. She now informs me of her being alive, and is coming here to meet me.

"My God! dear Nola, just see what a position I am placed in. I cannot stay here; I must hasten away to intercept her and turn her back. Nola, you will forgive me, I know, for thus unintentionally having wronged you. Heaven knows, if I could only repair the injury I would do so. As it is, you must see that I am powerless. As long as this wife lives I can never be aught to you, even though I love you dearly. I must flee forever from here, never again to look upon your face. Forgive me, Nola, and forget you ever met such a miserable wretch as I am. I am unworthy of your simplest thought. Destroy the certificate, and with the good minister and his wife to keep your secret no one need ever know that you were ever married.

"As for me, my lips are sealed forever.

"God bless you and forgive me!"

DICK."

Little wonder poor Nola had fainted!

Even Mrs. Salem felt like sinking through the floor, as she read the terrible news conveyed in this lying letter.

As soon as she recovered her scattered senses, she laid the letter on the table, and set to work to restore Nola to consciousness.

But she had undertaken a bigger task than she could accomplish. Poor Nola's swoon was not simply an ordinary fainting spell, but was deep and lasting, and stubbornly refused to yield to ordinary restoratives.

While the good woman was busied, doing all in her power, her husband returned, and learned the news, with a sad shake of the head, and both he and his wife worked faithfully over the unconscious girl.

Finally they succeeded in bringing her back to the light of reason, and with joy saw her open her eyes; but it was only for an instant, for she almost immediately went into spasms, and had one after another in rapid succession, each one growing harder than its predecessor.

Now thoroughly alarmed, Mr. Salem hastened away and got a doctor, who looked grave when he saw Nola's condition, but expressed the opinion that he could bring her around all right.

He labored steadily until midnight, and at last, succeeded in breaking the spasms by the use of opiates. He then took his departure, leaving Nola sleeping peacefully, and promised to return early in the morning.

There was no sleep for the eyes of the Salems that night, and with grave faces they sat beside and watched over their *protegee* with as much anxious concern as though she were in truth their own child.

It was the darkest hour before day-dawn, and all Santa Fe was wrapped in quiet, when a footstep sounded outside the Salem dwelling, and directly a light rap came upon the door.

Both the minister and his wife exchanged inquiring glances.

Only a moment before, the minister had been expressing it as his opinion that Deadwood Dick, Jr., never was the author of the letter, and now, as he heard the rap, he arose immediately to his feet.

"It's Richard's knock," he said, and immediately opened the door.

Instantly, headed by Don Juan Mellique, half a dozen men pushed into the room, and the door was slammed shut and locked.

All the men but Mellique were roughly dressed, armed to the teeth and masked. The Don presented his usual appearance.

At sight of the intruders, both the good minister and his wife retreated to the side of the couch where Nola lay, as if to shelter and protect her from harm; but Mellique only uttered a laugh that was full of villainous significance.

"Oho! so you're alarmed, you precious pair?" he said, folding his arms across his chest, and glaring at them angrily. "You feel dismayed to find yourself in so unenviable a position. Well, upon my word, I don't wonder. I'd feel uneasy if I were in your shoes!"

"Sir, what means this intrusion, at so unseemly an hour?" Mr. Salem demanded, sternly.

"Who are you, and what do you want?"

Don Juan laughed, hoarsely.

"Who are we?" he said, with a leer. "Well, I allow you know who I am, you old fraud."

I'm the guardian of that girl yonder, whom you kidnapped from home, and I've come for her I'm Don Juan Mellique!"

"Tis false! You are not the young woman's guardian, nor did we kidnap her from her home. She came to us of her own free will and sought protection from your persecutions. You have no claim upon her, for she is already the wife of another man!"

"Is that so? Who is this other man?"

"Richard Bristol"

"Where is he? Show him up!"

"He is not here."

"Aha! If that girl is married, where's her certificate? Show that if you please!"

"That is not possible, just now, for it is deposited in other hands for safe-keeping!"

"You lie, you old vagabond! Give me that certificate or I'll murder you!"

"I repeat, sir, I have not got the certificate, nor is it in this house."

"Who's got it, then, curse ye?"

"I decline to tell. Murder me if you will, you ruffian; but neither my wife nor I will give up the secret of the whereabouts of that certificate!"

"Ye won't, hey! Well, by the gods, you're a bravo, ain't you? But I'll clip your spurs before I'm through with you. Wake up that girl an' tell her I want her. She belongs to me!"

"No! no! you shall not disturb her!" the minister cried, excitedly. "You cannot awaken her for she was taken very ill to-night, and the doctor put her under the influence of opiates. She must not be disturbed!"

"She mustn't, hey? Well we'll see. Stand aside there, you pair of idiots!" and drawing a knife, the ruffian rushed savagely upon them.

"No! no! you shall not touch her!" fairly shrieked both the minister and his wife, maintaining their position in front of the couch. "You shall not touch the child!"

But vain was their attempt to shield her.

With merciless fury the Don bore down upon them, and his knife flashed swiftly through the air.

Two screams of mortal agony and the minister and his wife fell to the floor.

Quickly raising the insensible form of Nola in his arms, Don Juan turned to his companions:

"Quick! now!" he ordered. "Fire the shebang in a dozen places, for no evidence of this crime must be left behind. No one knows the girl was here, and we must be well away from here ere daybreak!"

The order was obeyed. The house was fired in several places. Then the gang mounted and sped away through the night as fast as their horses would carry them; and when morning dawned the Salem home was in ashes, and two shapeless, indistinguishable masses of smoldering flesh were left to speak of that nocturnal horror.

The coroner impaneled a jury that day, and a verdict was rendered to the effect that the Salem's came to their death through being incinerated in their own house through probable carelessness with fire.

CHAPTER XII.

OLD AVALANCHE PUTS IN AN APPEARANCE.

EARLY evening of the day following the fire, Don Juan stood in the library of the Mellique mansion, gazing about him, inquiringly.

He had just returned to the city, and had stealthily entered the house, half afraid to let his presence be known, for, guilty wretch that he was, he was now constantly haunted by a fear of impending danger to his personal safety.

But, when he stood in the library, and saw not, as he had feared, the distorted face and figure of Myra, lying ghastly in death before him, he drew a long breath of relief.

"Ah! I did not kill her, after all," he mused, turning up the light. "Perhaps it is all the worse for me that I did not, for she is a very tigress, and now she will go for me in dead earnest. She's got the vengeful Mellique blood in her veins, and she'll never forget the insult I put upon her. Humph! I wonder if there's any servants left in the house?"

He rung a bell communicating with the servants' quarters, and presently an old servitor of the Mellique's made her appearance.

"Ah! Molly, is that you?" the Don said.

"Where is your mistress?"

"She is gone, sir."

"Gone? Gone where?"

"Sure I don't know, sir. She did not tell me. She had a satchel when she went."

"Did she leave any word behind for me?"

"Yes, sir. She left a letter I was to give you. I'll get it."

And she retired, but soon returned with the letter, after which she quickly disappeared.

Don Juan lit a cigar, and then opened the missive.

This was what he read:

"JUAN MELL-QUE, *Murderer and Monster*:-

"I leave my late father's roof, to-day, for a time. During what time you have yet on earth, you can occupy the house if you choose. Your days, however, are numbered, and you had better make what reparation is possible, while you have life at your command. I have taken all the money, so you will never finger that. Beware! for you have but a few more hours to live. A tigress is on your trail, and hell hath no fury like a woman's hate. MYRA."

Juan tore the letter into bits, and his brow clouded darkly.

"Curse her!" he muttered, venomously. "I'd rather have a dozen men to fight than her. I must indeed be on my guard!"

Just one week later, we look into the spacious bar-room of the Planter's Hotel.

It is Saturday night, consequently "money" night for many a thirsty pilgrim, and the crowd assembled to sample Jim Burns's beverages is large and varied; while in the adjoining card-room money is changing hands rapidly, among excited devotees of the game.

Among those ranged along the bar, we recognize our veteran friend, Old Avalanche, the Great Annihilator.

Evidently the old man had but recently arrived, for, after getting a drink, he drew away from the bar and proceeded to "size up" the crowd, who were continually passing into and out of the saloon. By-and-by, he took a look into the card room, but, evidently, did not find the person he was looking for.

Finally, he strolled into the hotel office, and found the ever genial Jim Burns there presiding.

"Be you ther chap who runs this hyer shabang, cap'n?" the Annihilator interrogated, after scrutinizing Burns's herculean proportions.

"Waal, yes, I allow I'm somewhat that same," was the good-natured reply. "What can I do for you, pardner?"

"Well," replied Avalanche, mebbe ye can't do nuthin', an' then, ag'in, mebbe you kin. Reckon how as mebbe you've got a purty good memory fer names, eh?"

"Tolerably fair. Lookin' fer some one?"

"Jes' so. Ye see, ther war a friend o' mine kim down hyer, long back awhile ago, in charge of a corpse, an' as he's most generally gittin' himself into some ternal deeficulty, I allowed et behooved me to take a waltz down this way an' see what had become of him."

"Ah! yes. You say he come in charge of a corpse?"

"Yes. A feller got salivated, up in Del Norte an' Dickey he tuk charge o' the stiff, an' fetched et hum."

"It was the body of Don Jose Mellique, a gambler," was it not?"

"Same cadaver, by ther great ham-bone, yes."

"And your young friend's name was Bristol?"

"Same chap—Dickey Bristol; better known up nor', tho', as Deadwood Dick, Junior. D'y'e know ther boy, pardner?"

"Slightly. He registered here, one night. You see, when he first came here, he put up with Don Pedro, brother to the dead man, but finally, there was a fallin' out of some sort, and young Don Juan challenged Bristol to fight a duel. Your friend war goin' to sail in an' fight without a second, but I wouldn't hear to that, an' so I went along and seconded him, and—"

"Dickey got salivated!"

"Nary! He crippled Don Juan, while Juan let fly a wild bullet an' killed his Uncle Pedro, stone dead."

"Great ham-bone! An' what bekim of Dickey?"

"Well, all I know is that he started, that same day, for a place in the mountains, called 'The Turrets'—a spooky old place that was willed to him by Don Jose Mellique, the dead gambler. Since then, I haven't seen hide nor hair of him. I warned him to look out for himself, 'cause 'The Turrets' hev got no good shakes of a name, but he allowed he could take care of hisself."

"Bet sure's thunder he's got inter another deefickelty," the Annihilator declared, grimly.

"Did any one go with him?"

"Yes, a lawyer, named Sykes, what came along with him, from Del Norte."

"Has he showed up, yet?"

"Haven't see'd him. Yer friend told me, afore he went, that if he never came back to lay his funeral to Don Juan, the feller he fought the

duel with. Ye see, ther Don were expectin' to inherit 'The Turrets,' and when it leaked out that yer friend were the real heir et made the Don hoppin' mad. Then, too, I believe that was a woman connected wi' the case, somehow—sort o' love case, ye know, an' yer friend got the hip-holt on the Don. That's how et come to the duel. But, come 'round in the morning, when I've got more time, and I'll talk with you," and the host of the Planter's turned away, to attend to other duties.

Avalanche was about to return to the bar-room when he was approached and tapped upon the shoulder by a young man who, lounging near at hand, had been an attentive listener to the foregoing conversation—a very dandified-appearing young fellow he was, too, of below medium height, with small, womanish features, black eyes and hair, and a graceful little mustache of the same color.

His attire was expensive and fashionable, and his general appearance was decidedly that of a sport.

"Ah! beg pardon," he said, as the Annihilator looked around, "but I chanced to overhear a snatch of your conversation, and I infer that you are in search of Richard Bristol?"

"Thet's ther very identical hairpin I'm lookin' for," was the reply. "What do you know about him?"

"Well, not very much, I confess. I made his acquaintance when he first came to Santa Fe, and knowing it was his intention to remain here for some time, and that he has been missing for a matter of some eight days, I have grave apprehensions that he has met with foul play."

"Ye hev, eh?"

"Yes; but I don't care to say too much openly, here. If you will take a seat in one of the stalls in the adjoining room, we will speak further to the point."

"Kerect! I'm with yer, pard, fer I'm powerful anxious consarnin' Dickey, 'ca'se I think a heap o' him—by ther eternal ham-bone, yes!"

They were soon seated in one of the stalls, with a table between them; then the dandified fellow said:

"Let me see; what may I call you?"

"Wal, I opine Old Avalanche aire my handle—ther Great Injun Annihilator, an' furst pardner of ther Terrific Triangle, you bet!"

"Ah! I believe I heard Mr. Bristol mention you, in speaking of some of his adventures."

"Did, hey? Wal, now, I tell ye Dickey an' I hev bin in some almighty cluss corners, an' that's why I ken't believe ther boy hev gone under now."

"Well, I ho'e he hasn't, believe me. But the chances are that he's a goner."

"What's yer name?"

"Myra Mellique."

"Oho! A girl, eh?"

"Yes, but breathe not a word of that, for, were it known, I would be in deadly peril. I have not as yet been discovered. I have even met my worst enemy face to face, and he has not recognized me."

"Who is your worst enemy?"

"My cousin, Juan Mellique—the same party who has been the death of Deadwood Dick, providing Deadwood Dick is really dead. You see, both Dick and Juan fell in love with my foster-sister, and she ran away, as I suppose, with Dick, and possibly they were married. I think that perhaps Dick took her to 'The Turrets,' for he went there after the duel. At any rate, I believe Nola is a prisoner in Juan's power at 'The Turrets,' and if Dick is alive, no doubt he is a prisoner there, too."

"Don Juan has been absent from town several times during the past week, and I place no other construction on his absence than that he has been to 'The Turrets.'

"I have taken it upon myself to reconnoiter, and find that every available avenue of approach to the place is guarded by men whom I believe to be in Don Juan's employ. Therefore I argue that Don is guarding something, and what more probable than that it is Nola, or Dick, or perhaps both?"

"Ye'r right!" the Annihilator declared. "I'll bet a hen ag'in' a hump-backed hog yr'r right. An' ef my pard Dickey or his ladylove is in any such a scrape as that, why ther Terrific Triangle aire goin' fer sail in, tooth and toe-nail, to git 'em out!"

"And I'm with you! I want to see them out of trouble: then for my revenge on Juan Mellique, and the recovery of my rights! But we shall have to play our cards sharp, old man, to win. It will take all our ingenuity to get past the guards, and into the old chateau. And, even then, we may not be able to find those we search for, for the old place is said to be a very

labyrinth of mysterious hiding-places, where one could be hidden away in defiance of the sharpest search."

"Never ye mind," the Annihilator assured. "Jest ye show me ther place, an' we'll do ther bizzness ef it takes a month o' Sundays ter do et in."

"I'm with you. I'll leave you now, and to-morrow we will meet, and perfect further arrangements."

The two separated, the Annihilator soon afterward turning in for the night, in a very anxious and excited state of mind.

CHAPTER XIII. FOR A FATHER'S SAKE.

A LAPSE of one month more.

Once more we are at the chateau-like old structure among the wilds of the New Mexican mountains.

As we enter the great hall, and glance into the parlor and other lower apartments, we notice a great change since our last visit.

The carpets have been swept, the windows washed, the pictures rearranged, the furniture reburndished and repaired, and cheery fires burn upon the hearth in more than one room.

In fact, everything indicates that The Turrets now is a place of human abode rather than a rookery for night-owls.

The great hall and winding-stairs have been newly carpeted. Just outside the grand entrance a liveried attendant, in Spanish costume, and armed with a magazine rifle, paces to and fro.

Passing up the stairs, we finally come to the great front chamber, with vaulted ceiling and antique carved panel walls. Here again we find evidence of elaborate refurnishing. Just without the entrance we also encounter another armed sentinel, nearly a counterpart in appearance to the one below.

Within the chamber all is warmth and cheeriness, with a cheery fire blazing upon the hearth, the furniture and adornments tastefully arranged, and neatness and cleanliness visible everywhere.

In a partially curtained alcove is a luxuriant bed of snowy whiteness, but it is now unoccupied, for, bolstered up in a great easy-chair, near the fire, is the invalid for whom all these comforts have been specially provided.

A young lady, not yet out of her teens but very pale and wan, and evidently convalescing from a severe illness—a beauteous creature, with a face of marvelous sweetness, even though the roses have faded from her cheeks, and her eyes wear a wearied, saddened expression.

Arrayed in a soft satin dressing-gown, and wearing her hair becomingly arranged, we still recognize Nola.

A prettily-attired waiting maid, flitting here and there, attracts the fair invalid's attention, and she summons her.

"Come here, Leonora."

"Yes, my lady. What can I do for you?"

"Nothing, only draw your chair, here, by mine. I want to talk to you."

Leonora obeyed, and when seated the invalid went on:

"I have been very sick, have I not?"

"Yes, ma'am—very, very sick. For weeks you have been lingering at death's door."

"Would to God I had died. To live, with me, is worse than death. I am at 'The Turrets' am I not?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"How came I here?"

"I do not know, ma'am. You were here when I was brought here to nurse you."

"Then, I am a prisoner?"

"No, not exactly, although you will not be permitted to leave the place, without the master's orders."

"By the master, you mean Don Juan?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then, God have mercy on me, if I am again in his power! Where is he?"

"He has not been here, for several days, but is expected at any minute. He has been very kind and considerate toward you, ma'am, and has seemingly done all in his power to make your surroundings pleasant. He has tearfully watched by your bedside, when we all thought you were dying, and everything for your benefit that money could procure, has found its way to 'The Turrets'."

"Ahl yes, and all this he has done, in the vain hope of advancing his own selfish interests."

"Nay, ma'am, I do not think so. There cannot be a doubt but what the Don loves you devotedly. When he learned of your hasty marriage he was nearly heart-broken, and I am

confident he gave up all hope. But, after the railway accident, whereat your husband and his first wife both lost their lives—"

"What! my husband *dead*?"

"Nay, not your husband, ma'am, for the man had no claim upon you. He was a rank impostor, ma'am, for not only was he married to the woman for whom he so cruelly forsook you, but has still another wife living in Texas, as has since been proven. So you have reason to be thankful that matters never came to any worse pass than they did!"

"No! no! This is not true, what you are telling me! I cannot, will not believe it. You are but a tool of Don Juan, placed here to poison my mind against the only man I ever loved."

"You are wrong, my lady, I assure you. What I have told you is true, and, so far as the Don is concerned, he has never uttered a word of instructions what I was to say to you, my only orders being to watch closely that you wanted for nothing. He has been exceedingly kind to you, and when you are a little stronger, has a great surprise in store for you, which he feels hopeful will so soften your feelings toward him, that you will consent to become his wife."

"Indeed! And what is the surprise that could soften my heart toward him?"

"Well, you see, my lady, Don Pedro is dead, and since his death papers have come to light revealing that he was a very bad man. It seems that years ago Don Pedro committed a horrible triple murder, and that your father, Nathan Norris, was a witness to the crime, and threatened to give Pedro up to justice. Pedro, however, secured his capture, and ever since has held him a close prisoner in this place, hiring a hideous dwarf to guard against your father's escape. This dwarf being partly demented and afraid of strangers has in some unaccountable manner gained the sobriquet of the Man-Dragon, but he is simply a half lunatic of painful deformity, for I have seen him. He is very sly, however, and I don't believe Satan himself could catch him."

"But, my father!—where is *he*?"

"At liberty about the house, but not as yet permitted to leave it until the Don sees you."

"Ah! I see. The Don proposes to use my father as an instrument by which to force me to marry him?"

"I know not, lady, more than that the Don is determined to have you for his wife, and I heard him say that if you married him your father should go free, a rich man. So, if I were you, I would yield to his wishes."

"Has my father seen me yet?"

"Yes, several times since you have been ill, but you were out of your mind and recognized no one."

"Go, bring this man here, whom they say is my father," Nola ordered. "I will see him now."

"Oh! but, miss, I wouldn't dare to, without the master's directions. He would be very angry with me!"

"Go and do as I direct!" Nola commanded, authoritatively. "If I am to be mistress of 'The Turrets' I will take command now!"

Leonora looked frightened, but, after hesitating a moment, and seeing that she was really expected to obey, she arose and left the room, while Nola composed herself as best she could to meet the man who was reported to be her father.

She fancied it would take but a glance for her to tell whether it was her father, or whether it was an impostor, put up to lure her into marrying the Don.

Although it was ten years ago, when she was a child of eight, since she had seen her father, she still retained in her memory a faint recollection of how he then looked—enough, at any rate, so that she still believed she might recognize him.

So it was with keenest interest she awaited his coming.

Some ten minutes was Leonora absent; then the chamber-door opened and she entered, leading a man by the arm—a man some fifty years of age, with a tall, attenuated figure, thin features and sunken eyes, and whose sweeping beard and long hair were as white as driven snow.

He was poorly clad, yet cleanly in appearance, and a pair of handcuffs secured his wrists together in front of him.

He advanced slowly, hesitatingly toward Nola, as if fearful that she would repulse his approach.

Their gaze met—by one intuition they knew each other—in an instant more he was kneeling beside her, and her arms lovingly encircled his neck.

"I'm thinking of all that. Can this really be you, or am I dreaming?"

"No, my child, I am your father, indeed, and praise be God that I am spared to gaze upon your face once more—you, my little Nola, whom I have not seen for ten long years, and never expected to see again, in this life. Verily, I could now die, without a murmur of regret, for I have lived to see you grow to a glorious womanhood, the image of your mother who passed away before you had grown to an age of understanding."

"Speak not of dying, dear father, when we have but just found each other. For each other's comfort and happiness, I trust we have yet many years to live!"

"Alas! my child, you know not all. Now that you have come back from the portals of death, at which for weeks you have lingered, we must soon part again. You know not all, my child, and I—I cannot tell you!"

"I do know all, father—every thing. Juan Mellique has sworn to possess me as his wife, and to attain that end, will stop at nothing. He proposes to make you the instrument with which to force me to marry him."

"Ay! ay! my child; you speak the truth only too truly. It is even so."

"If I refuse to marry him he will cast you back into the dungeon."

"Even worse than that, I fear. He has told me that if you refuse to marry him, when he asks you again, he will have me killed before your eyes. Oh! God, it is terrible—terrible!"

"Be not in despair, dear father, for no harm shall come to you. Instead, I will marry him, and you shall be free, once more, to go forth into the world wheresoever you will."

"No! no! my child, it cannot, shall not be. You shall never sacrifice your pure young life to that inhuman monster, to save my life—never! I am not afraid to die. Better death than ten years more of imprisonment. Indeed, now that God has spared me to gaze upon your angel face, to take your hand in mine, and receive your kisses upon my furrowed brow, I can say I am quite content to yield up this troubous life, in hopes of the great and glorious future redemption!"

"Nay, say not so. Were you a hundred times willing and prepared to go, it shall not be so. I will marry Juan Mellique whenever he shall demand it, but, it need only be in word of speech. Once the knot is tied, and you are free, there is no law in the country to force me to live with him. So, cheer up, for all will yet come out right. I already feel nerved with a mighty and a righteous power and resolve to outwit this demon, and I will do so!"

"Bravely spoken, my heroic child! But I shudder at the thought of your taking even the name of such a detestable scoundrel!"

"It matters little. The only man I ever loved, but you dear parent, is now dead, they say, and so it matters little whose name I bear, as long as I have you to live for. So be of good heart, for I see brighter light beyond all these dark clouds that hover around us. Leonora tells me the Don will be here to-day, and if he asks me to marry him, and sets you free, my answer will be 'yes'!"

"Which proves that you have at last come to your senses!" cried a meant-to-be pleasant voice, and Don Juan, fashionably attired, stepped into the room.

"You will excuse me, I pray," he added, apologetically, "but I arrived just in time to catch your last words, and could not resist the temptation to come in. And so, at last you will consent to become mine, Donna Nola?"

"To save my father's life, and secure his liberty, I will make the sacrifice," Nola realized.

"Noble girl! But, it need not necessarily be a sacrifice, as I shall ever strive to make you content and happy, even though you say you bear me no love. And, when shall the nuptial knot be tied, *ma belle*?"

"As soon as suits you, after I feel a little stronger."

"Say, to-morrow evening, at eight, then."

"As well, then, as any time, I suppose."

"Very well. We will consider it so settled. Mr. Norris?"

"Well, sir."

"Give me your wrists, and I will remove the handcuffs. But, I shall insist upon your remaining here until after the ceremony."

"Certainly. I shall remain."

"Very well. There! You are now at liberty to enjoy the Donna's society to the fullest, and I trust that in the future, our mutual relations will be of the pleasantest character. I must now hasten back to the city to perfect pre-

parations, for I intend to have a spread-out fit for a prince, and as many guests present as care to undertake the journey hither!"

And, soon after, the elated Don took his departure.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN DURANCE VILE—AND OUT.

AND, now, dear reader, let's return to one, whom we have neglected too long—to Deadwood Dick Junior, in his dungeon.

After the departure of Don Juan and Simeon Sykes, he stood leaning against the grated door of his cell, a prey to most harassing thoughts.

Here he was, a prisoner, far from human help, with no prospect of ever leaving the place alive—a situation to make the heart of the bravest man quail within him. For some time he stood, not even making an effort to release the cords that confined his feet.

Finally, however, he sat down upon the floor, and slowly began to pick away at the knot.

As soon as he got his feet unbound, he arose and searched his pockets, and was in a measure elated to find two articles had not been removed from his person, namely, his watch, and his small tin box of matches.

The first thing was to strike a light, and look at the time, and he found that it was much later than he had supposed—nearly three o'clock A. M.

After winding up his watch—for that now seemed like a near and dear friend to him—he struck another match, and by its light was able to get a pretty fair idea of his new quarters.

The dungeon was about ten feet square by eight in height, and had apparently been blasted out of the solid rock. The door of heavy iron bars swung on ponderous hinges, and was secured by a lock that would scarcely have yielded to the persuasion of a battering-ram.

At the rear of the room through a little groove, ran a stream of pure water, that found its entrance to and exit from the dungeon by crevices in the rock.

The furniture was better than Dick had reason to expect. There was a long wooden settee, with a pillow and several heavy blankets; a chair, a small table, a bucket, wash-basin, towel, and a tin cup, and in one corner, a pile of resinous pine fagots.

Dick soon had one of these converted into a torch, and thrust into a crevice; then, by counting the fagots and his matches, he figured it out that he would be able to keep himself in light for a month or more, providing he did not burn it steadily.

"Well, that's one point in my favor," he mused. "If they give me bread enough, I fancy I shall be able to keep alive for a time at least."

The first twenty-four hours of his imprisonment passed without any one coming near the dungeon, and so did the second.

By this time, having had nothing to eat since leaving Santa Fe, he was, of course, feeling famished.

At noon of the third day Sykes made his first appearance, and shoved a loaf of bread through, between the bars.

"Get your drink out of the rill," he said gruffly, and then hurried away.

After that, when Dick awoke each morning, he found a loaf inside his cell door, but saw nothing of the one who brought it.

And thus the days dragged on.

By the time the first week was up, the monotony of the situation had grown almost unbearable, and the prisoner was beginning to feel desperate. Already he had racked his brain in vain, trying to invent some scheme of escape; but at last he was forced to give up in despair. Without outside aid there was no way of escaping from that underground cell in the rock.

The first break to the monotony came the second Sunday of his incarceration, rather unexpectedly. He was lying on the settee, in utter darkness, not wishing to burn any more than possible of the fagots, when he heard stealthy footsteps approaching down the hall outside, and saw the reflection of a light.

A moment more, a strange-looking being, lantern in hand, came to a halt in front of the door, and peered in through the grating.

The story of the Man-Dragon instantly flashed across Dick's mind, and he sat up on his bed and surveyed the object without in great curiosity.

He beheld a short but powerfully-built dwarf, with a huge hump on his back; a face lit up by a large and bright pair of eyes; a man past middle age, apparently, whose face was dotted with patches of beard, and whose shock of red-

dish hair grew straight upward, giving a fierce effect.

He held the lantern so that the light streamed into the furthest part of the dungeon, and fell upon the prisoner, at whom he glared steadily.

At which Dick called out:

"I say there, Mr. Ogre, who are you, and what do you want?"

There was no answer, except a hideous grin, followed by a guttural sort of a chuckle; then the "ogre" turned abruptly away, and his cat-like footsteps died out, in the distance.

"Well, shoot me for a shrimp, if that ain't an odd sort of cuss!" Dick commanded. "That must be the individual they call Man-Dragon. He's ugly enough to frighten a midnight cat into fits. I hope my abrupt address didn't scare him off. Even an occasional peep at such a sight is preferable to this endless monotony."

He spent the remainder of the day in conjecture as to whether the dwarf would return again, or not, and late in the evening his patience was rewarded by seeing the ugly face once more outside the bars.

This time the dwarf carried, in addition to the lantern, a package done up in brown paper, which, after some squeezing, he succeeded in pushing through between the grates, into the dungeon.

Then, he retreated, as silently as he had come.

Hastily lighting a torch, Dick proceeded to give the package an examination, and found it to contain several other packages.

Opening these, imagine his surprise to find that one contained a quantity of chipped venison, another some raw bear meat, a third a tin canister of whisky, and the fourth a pipe, some smoking tobacco, and a quantity of matches.

To say that our Monte Cristo was elated would be "drawing it mild." He felt like giving a war-whoop of joy.

Such a streak of luck was something entirely unexpected, and he felt even though he might not succeed in making his escape, he at least had a friend in the dwarf.

The days dragged by, and lengthened into weeks, but each day, a package similar to the first, found its way into Dick's dungeon.

But, now, the morning ration of bread ceased to come.

Dick understood the significance of this!

Don Juan proposed to starve him to death.

Dick felt perfectly well satisfied that the stuff brought him by the dwarf, was brought unknown to the demon Don!

Notwithstanding that he was still a prisoner, Dick could but feel grateful toward the dwarf, and several times sought to express his gratitude in words, but the attempt proved literally futile, for the grotesque creature never spoke, nor by any action acknowledged that he comprehended the prisoner's meaning.

As silently as he came, thus silently did he depart.

The days wore away, until six weeks had passed since Dick had entered upon his imprisonment.

The same night that witnessed the meeting of Nola Norris and her father, the dwarf once more appeared at the door of Dick's dungeon.

He brought only the lantern now, for he had been to the cell once before that day, with provisions, and his second visit was a matter of some surprise to Dick.

As he approached the cell, Dick saw that he staggered, perceptibly, and then perceived that there was a bloody wound in his left breast.

Without so much as a word, the dwarf produced a key, unlocked the door, and entering the dungeon, reached out through the grating and relocked the door from the outside.

Dick watched this proceeding with no little wonderment, but refrained from speaking.

The dwarf next placed the lantern on the table, and then seated himself upon the single chair, and for a moment gazed steadfastly at the prisoner, with his great wild eyes.

"You are Deadwood Dick?" he finally said, interrogatively.

"Correct."

"And a prisoner of Juan Mellique?"

"Right again."

"I am Jareek Wolfraven, sometimes called by the superstitions the Man-Dragon. For years 'The Turrets' has been my home. I have hidden myself away from the world because of my hideousness. I am now mortally wounded, and fast nearing my end, and to you I want to make my ante-mortem statement."

"Very well. Go ahead. But are you sure your wound is as dangerous as you state?"

"Yes. I am satisfied on that score. I stole some papers from Don Juan to-night, and he

caught me at it and gave me my death wound. I escaped from the house, however, eluded pursuit, and returned here by a secret route known only to myself. When I have told you all I have to say you shall have your liberty, providing you will avenge my death!"

"No need to ask me that, for if I ever get free, Don Juan shall surely die—the infamous villain that he is!" was Dick's fierce reply.

"Then it is well. Have you any of the whisky left which I brought you?"

"Plenty of it."

"Then give me a swallow, for it will help to keep up my strength until I have done."

Dick procured the canteen, and he took a copious drink, after which he seemed to brace up, wonderfully.

"Well," he said, finally, "for the past ten years I have been in the employ of Don Pedro Mellique, now deceased. I have acted as jailer over a man who has been imprisoned in a dungeon not far from this, and the Don paid me well and instead of hoarding up my money, I have spent the most of it toward providing for the comfort of my prisoner, as he will tell you when you see him."

"Do I know him?"

"He is the father of Donna Nola, Don Pedro's adopted daughter. His name is Nathan Norris, and he has been a prisoner here these ten years, because he held the secret of Don Pedro having committed an atrocious murder, and fearful of being betrayed, the Don kept him locked up."

"Where is he now?"

"In the mansion above, where both he and Nola are held as prisoners. The Donna has been very ill for weeks, and is only now convalescing. To-morrow night, at eight o'clock, she will become Don Juan's wife!"

"What! she marry that devil? Never!" and Dick sprang to his feet, excitedly.

"As I say, she will marry him, unless you interfere, which you must do!"

"But, explain. I do not understand. Surely Nola would never consent to marry the Don, knowing herself to be my wife."

"It is to save her father's life. The Don has promised to set Nathan Norris free, providing Nola marries him. On the contrary, if Nola were to refuse, the Don has sworn to kill her father before her very eyes. So you see the fix she is in. Having been assured that you are dead, she prefers to marry the Don rather than see her parent slaughtered in cold blood. No one can really blame her, either. But, you must be on hand, to prevent the marriage!"

"Ay! I will be there, if you will get me out of this accursed den. I will yet baffle that hellhound, Juan Mellique—a fit companion only for wolves."

"I will show you how to leave here. But, first, here are important papers that I wish to consign to your care. Here is the deed to 'The Turrets,' in Jose Mellique's name, and the will making you heir. These were stolen from the surrogate's office, by Sykes, and given to Juan, who neglected to destroy them. Here is the will of Pedro Mellique, making his daughter his sole legatee. I stole these away from Juan's room, because I hate him, but it was at the cost of my life. I will show you, now, how to leave these vaults, and then I will return to die. You had best hasten at once to Santa Fe, disguise yourself, and lay some plan to be present at the wedding. I will add that Don Juan has five desperadoes guarding 'The Turrets,' and you will therefore act accordingly. Now, take my arm, and I will show you the way out. You will find horses in the gulch, which you will enter, when you leave here, and you had best get out of the neighborhood as soon as possible."

Most willingly Dick took the key and unlocked the door, then, equipped with the lantern, and supporting Wolfraven on his arm, he stepped from the dungeon, once more a free man!

For some minutes they walked along through winding subterranean passages; then came to where a stone staircase wound upward.

"This leads to the mansion above!" Wolfraven explained, "so, mark it well, for you may have to use it on your return. The exit is a little further on."

In a couple of minutes more they came to what was evidently the end of the passage, for they were confronted by a mass of boulders, both large and small.

"Push this one side," Wolfraven explained, indicating one of the lot.

Dick obeyed, and found to his surprise that it swung easily inward, as if on a pivot.

An opening was revealed only large enough for a person to creep through lying flat upon the ground.

"That opens into a clump of bushes, in the

gulch below 'The Turrets,'" the dwarf explained. "Should you return this way, all you have to do is to creep into the hole, push against the rock, and it will admit you. Now, go, and may you succeed in defeating Juan Mellique and avenging me!"

Not without sincere regret at leaving the dwarf to die in that dismal solitude, Dick bade him farewell, first counseling him to pray to the good Father of all for mercy.

Then he crept from the vault, and in five minutes was mounted and speeding away toward Santa Fe.

CHAPTER XV.

SILENCING A WITNESS.

IT was scarcely mid-forenoon, when Deadwood Dick, Junior, arrived in the vicinity of the city, the next day.

He did not ride immediately into the place, but to a chaparral in the neighborhood, where he had securely cached a variety of disguises.

Here he spent an hour or more; then he had undergone a great change, for he was attired in a fine broadcloth suit, with a silk hat, and had the appearance of a gentleman of leisure.

He wore an iron-gray wig, and a stunning pair of side-whiskers and mustache of the same shading, and, altogether, there was something so decidedly foreign about his make-up that he could easily have been mistaken for a well-to-do nabob from across the Atlantic.

Certain it was, no one would have recognized him as Deadwood Dick.

He went straight to the Planter's Hotel, and finding Proprietor Jim Burns at liberty, sought and secured an interview with him.

Then, much to the hotel-keeper's astonishment, he made known his identity, and narrated all about what had happened in the past six weeks, and what was about to happen that night.

"Well, that beats a novel all holler!" Burns declared. "On course ye'r' goin' ter try to stop ther weddin'?"

"Most assuredly. And I want your co-operation."

"All right! I'm with ye, tooth an' toenail!"

"Good. You're the right man, in the right place. Now, who is deputy-sheriff, here, in Santa Fe?"

Burns took his pipe from his mouth, with an air of vast importance.

"Waal, ef ther Circuit Court knows anything about herself, and she rather think she do, I happen ter be thet same indevidual."

"Indeed? Then, better yet. I want you to be at 'The Turrets,' to-night, with a posse of men who are not afraid to fight if it comes to fight. I can get you into the house all right and at a given signal, you are to rush in and arrest Mellique."

"All right! I'm ready to do all I can to fetch the cuss to Limerick. An' thar's a man yonder as I kin count on fer one!" and he pointed out of the window to where a man was passing along the street.

Dick was on his feet in an instant.

"Old Avalanche!" he ejaculated.

"Just so. He's been around here quite awhile, a-lookin' fer a feller about your size. Been a-scoutin' up around 'The Turrets,' fer about a month, tryin' ter get inter the shebang, but hasn't succeeded. Guess the old chap's 'bout gi'n out in disgust."

"Not he! But, call him in, and quiz him. Something worth knowing may be learned. Mention nothing of my presence."

Burns obeyed, and the Annihilator was soon seated in the parlor.

"Well, scout, what's the best word?" Burns queried. "Any success?"

"Havn't hed much, but I allow thar's some prospect ahead. Can't say's we'll find Dickey, tho', fer I've got an achin' in me bones thet he's a goner!"

"Oh! pshaw! You mustn't git down in the mouth. On what is your prospect of success based, my old friend?"

"Waal, ye see I've got one o' ther Spaniard's men ter consent to turn evidence ag'in' him, an' as soon as we kin capture the cuss, inter the jug he goes! He's guilty of two murders, an' even ef I ken't find Dickey, I'll make the Don hump!"

"Two murders, you say?"

"Yas. The Don hev got Donna Nola shut up, at 'The Turrets.' He stole her away from the minister's family, where she was stayin', killed the minister and wife wi' his own hands, and then had the house fired to hide ther crime."

"Will the fellow swear to this?"

"Yes. He war one o' the gang as went to the house. The Don done all the killin'."

"Where is the fellow?"

"I can get him in a jiffy."

"Then fetch him at once. A warrant shall be got out immediately. Do you know if the Don is in town?"

"No; don't know just where the beast is."

"Well, never mind. Mention nothing of an intended arrest lest some harm come to the girl. We'll nab the devil at 'The Turrets' to-night!"

Avalanche took his departure, and then Burns turned to Dick.

"Well, what do you propose to do, pard?"

"I've hit upon the very plan," Dick replied. "How many men will you take with you?"

"Eight."

"Very well. Here is my plan. The party must start from here, so as to arrive in the gulch at dusk. I will show you how to gain entrance to 'The Turrets' by way of the underground vaults. Then, with one of your party, I will leave you."

"What to do?"

"We will ride to the main entrance to 'The Turrets,' and I will send in a card, requesting an interview with the Don, representing myself to be a lawyer who has come to see him in regard to a fortune that has been left to a former member of his uncle's family, named Nola Norris, information of whose whereabouts I seek. Avaricious scoundrel, he will bite at the bait, and I'll get the interview. Then I'll play my cards so well, that I'll get an invitation to remain at the wedding. See?"

"Good! You've got a level head!"

"At eight o'clock the ceremony is to take place. You are to be within easy hearing distance of three sharp whistles. When you hear them, you are to rush into the parlor and nab your man."

The plan was so promising that it was at once adopted, and preparations were quietly and rapidly made for the *denouement* which that night was destined to witness.

Tozer, the man who was to stand evidence against the Don, was produced, and his affidavit taken, and on the strength of it warrants were issued for Juan's arrest, and placed in the hands of Deputy Burns.

Other necessary arrangements were perfected, and by noon all was in readiness for a start for "The Turrets."

In the mean time there is another scene of our story we must not omit.

Don Juan had arrived in Santa Fe early that morning, and in a couple hours' time had started off a *posse* of caterers for "The Turrets," equipped with everything needed for a grand "spread-out" after the marriage ceremony. After this was arranged he proceeded to the Mellique residence, and busied himself for a couple of hours in packing up his and Nola's personal effects, for it was his intention to take a bridal tour East on the morrow.

He had only just finished, when the doorbell rung, and Simeon Sykes was shown in.

"Ah! going away?" the scoundrel confederate asked, on seeing the trunks.

"Yes, on a two weeks' bridal tour. Nola becomes mine, to-night."

"Ah! then, all's well, I infer."

"Well, yes—that is in one sense. In another, all is not well. Sykes, I was robbed of those valuable papers, last night. I caught Wolf-raven in my room, at 'The Turrets.' He had broken open a drawer, and secured the documents. I shot him, but he leaped from a window and escaped. Sykes, you must go to 'The Turrets,' take charge of my men, and scour the country in search of that accursed dwarf. He must be found, and the papers recovered, if it costs a fortune, I think I mortally wounded the cuss, and it may not be a hard matter to find him. So take charge of the case during my absence, and if you recover the papers it will be another feather in your nest."

"And if I don't?" Sykes asked, seating himself on a trunk, and lighting a cigar.

"Why, I'll pay you for your work, of course."

"Humph! Well, you see, it's this way, Mellique: I'm getting sore tired of taking promises for pay, and that sort of business won't work any longer."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I mean that I've been playing in with you long enough without receiving any pay, and I've come here, to-day, to settle up accounts to date."

"Indeed? It strikes me you're getting rather ahead of yourself ain't you?"

"Not a bit of it! It takes money to buy honey, and my appetite for honey, to-day, is unusually sharp. You've got plenty of cash, and

can settle up now, better'n after your wedding trip, no doubt."

"Oh! well, I dare say it makes but little difference, so far as *that* is concerned. How much do you want?"

"The full amount of what you owe me."

"Indeed! And how much is that? I do not know that any special price has been set."

"No, for I allow I'm the one to set the price."

"Set it, then. I've no time to parley over small matters like that!"

"Correct. I want, for what I've already done, a round ten thousand dollars."

"What?" Don Juan looked thunderstruck, for a moment; then he burst into a harsh laugh.

"You're a fool, Sykes."

"I've named my price, and I intend to have it!" was the grim reply.

"Have you gone mad, man?"

"Not at all, I mean business!"

"Then, you'd better go to some one else, to talk your *business* with. You'll live to be as old as Methuselah before you do any of that sort of business with me."

"Will I? We'll see. I want ten!"

"You'll never get a tenth part of it!"

"Then, look out for me!"

"What do you mean?"

"Business! No wedding at 'The Turrets' to-night!"

Don Juan's eyes gleamed dangerously at this.

"Who will prevent it?" he hissed, venomously.

"I will," Sykes replied, coolly. "If my demand for the ten thousand dollars is not immediately satisfied, I will go to the proper authorities, expose all your criminal acts, and have you locked up within the hour."

The Don uttered a fearful oath.

"You hell-hound, you dare not turn traitor!" he cried.

"But I dare, though," Sykes declared. "So decide at once. Shall I have my price?"

"Never! I will see you in Tophet first."

"Very well. If I meet you there, you'll know me. I must be going now, so good-morning!" and rising, he strode toward the door.

The moment his back was turned, a pistol gleamed in the Don's grasp.

Conscious of his peril, Sykes made a quick leap to get out of the room, but just too late: there was a flash, a sharp report, and with a wild yell the lawyer reeled and went crashing to the floor.

An instant later, Don Juan was bending over him.

"Dead, sure enough!" he muttered; "and now, I alone hold my secrets. I must secrete his body, and away from here ere more intruders come. To-morrow I will mortgage everything for whatever I can get, and flee with my bride to parts of the country where the name of Juan Mellique is unknown!"

CHAPTER XVI.

A STARTLING DENOUEMENT.

JUST as the dusky shadows were beginning to settle over the landscape that evening, two horsemen rode up to the main entrance to The Turrets and drew rein.

One was Deadwood Dick, Junior, in his disguise of an aristocratic-appearing foreigner; the other was a roughly-dressed chap, who was well known in Santa Fe as an able guide.

The sentinel, who patrolled to and fro in front of the entrance to The Turrets, at once advanced to meet the new arrivals.

"Who are you, and what's your business?" he demanded gruffly, holding his rifle in a ready attitude.

"I am a gentleman from the East who has called to see Don Juan on a matter of business," Dick explained.

"The Don will not receive visitors to-night," the sentinel replied. "You will have to call another time."

"That will be impossible, sir. My business is important, and I must see him now. Here, I will give you my card. Be kind enough to see that it reaches him."

Dick drew from his pocket an ordinary business card, on one side of which was printed:

"HENRY GIBSON,

"Counselor at Law,

"CHICAGO."

On the back of this Dick wrote, in pencil:

"DON MELLIQUE:-

"SIR:—I have called to see you in reference to a fortune left to one Nola Norris, a former resident of Santa Fe."

"H. GIBSON."

Giving this card to the sentinel, he directed:

"Convey that to the Don, and he will understand."

The man nodded and disappeared within the mansion. He soon returned, however, and said:

"It's all right. Dismount and come in. The Don will see you in the parlor."

Bidding his companion await outside, Dick dismounted, and was ushered into the great parlor, where, faultlessly attired, the Don received him politely.

"I am glad to meet you, sir," he said, "although I had given out orders not to be disturbed. By your card, I infer that you are a lawyer."

"Exactly, from Chicago, and arrived in Santa Fe to-day, in search of a Miss Norris, to whom a large fortune has been left by a distant relative. She had been a member of the family of one Pedro Mellique, but I learned that Pedro was dead, and the present whereabouts of Miss Norris were unknown. An acquaintance of the family, however, advised me to come here and see you, suggesting that you might be able to give me her address."

"Quite right, sir; Miss Norris is here at present, and is to become my wife at eight this evening."

"Indeed! You are fortunate, for, in securing her for your wife, you also secure a prize worth having."

"Is that so?"

"Miss Norris' fortune amounts to half a million in money."

Juan Mellique's eyes sparkled.

"Well, I should say that was a windfall!" he said. "Where is this money if it is in that shape?"

"In Santa Fe. As soon as I have made a few necessary arrangements with your affianced, the money will be paid over to her. Can I see Miss Norris?"

"I would prefer you should not, until after the marriage ceremony."

"And why this delay?"

"Well, you see," replied the Don, looking considerably embarrassed, "it might not be advisable to let her know of her good fortune until the excitement of the wedding is over. I am marrying a poor girl, and it is a mutual case of love, you know. But you also know what a fickle thing love is, and how weak women are. If Nola were to know of this fortune beforehand, she might take it into her head to postpone the nuptials, or throw up the matter altogether."

"Well, there is something in that. Perhaps it would be as well not to apprise her of her good fortune until after she is your bride."

"I am sure it would be advisable not to. Not that I have any mercenary motives in the case, but I prefer to marry her as a poor girl, and then she can never throw it in my face that I married her for her money."

"Quite proper! Quite proper! Then, too, the fortune will be a magnificent dower for her."

"True enough!" Juan said, all eagerness. "And now I can rely upon you to withhold the joyful tidings until she has been made legally my bride."

"As you wish it, it shall be so," Dick replied, rising, as if to depart.

"I will return to the city, and you can look for my return to-morrow."

"No, no! That is not to be thought of," the Don hastily replied. "I shall insist that you remain as my guest for the night, and be present at the wedding. After the ceremony we are to have a little banquet in celebration of the event, and it will be a fitting occasion for you to make known to my bride that she is an heiress."

Dick made a pretense of hesitation at accepting the invitation, but the Don pressed him so hard that he finally gave his consent to remain.

Night came on early in the mountains, and it would be several hours yet before the ceremony was to take place, and as the Don excused himself, on pretense of having some preliminary arrangements to attend to, Dick was left to his own reflections.

"The plan will work like a charm," he mused, as he sat staring at the grand old pictures with which the parlor was adorned. "The avaricious scoundrel bit at the bait, just as I expected he would, and wants to secure his bird before she gets wind of the fortune, lest she back out, as she did before."

"But, your exultation at the prospect will pale sadly, Juan Mellique, and that, too, very soon. You have played your cards with extraordinary daring and cunning, but you have lost the game. In this case clubs will be the cards

to down you, while, with hearts triumphant, I will scoop in the stakes."

The minister who was to perform the marriage ceremony soon arrived, and with him came several ladies and gentlemen from the city, whom the Don had invited to be present.

Much to Dick's surprise, the minister was the same one to whom he had gone for information, when in quest of news concerning the Salem family—the Reverend Joseph Marston.

The time having come nigh for the ceremony to take place, there was considerable expectancy among the guests.

Dick felt more excited than he would have been willing to admit, but managed to preserve a calm exterior.

He knew that a crisis was near at hand.

What if, by any unforeseen contingency, Deputy Burns should fail to be at hand?

Then, there must necessarily be a scene, and it would devolve upon Dick, personally, to prevent the marriage, if indeed, he must resort to actual force.

Shortly before eight o'clock, the Don called him out into the hall.

"Mr. Gibson," he said, "would it be asking too much of you if I were to request you to act as my groomsman?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I'm afraid it would," Dick replied. "I never filled such a position, and as there are other younger gentlemen present, I beg that you will excuse me, and make your selections from among them."

The Don bowed rather stiffly, and turned away, evidently displeased.

Dick returned to the parlor.

Promptly at eight o'clock the bridal party entered the room. Nola, leaning upon the arm of her father, looking pale, almost ghostly, in her bridal robe of white.

The Don was attended by one of the gentlemen guests.

The party took their positions at one end of the room before the minister, who awaited their arrival, book in hand.

At sight of Nola, the revered gentleman gave a start, and looked grave.

He shook hands with the affianced couple, however, and then motioned Nathan Norris to step one side. A few words were exchanged in an undertone between them.

When the minister returned before the Don and Nola, his face had assumed a still graver aspect.

"My young friends," he said in an impressive tone, "when I was invited here to perform a marriage service, I was not aware who the contracting parties were. It now becomes my duty however, to inform you that it will be impossible for me, as a minister of the Gospel, to unite you in wedlock!"

"What do you mean?" cried the Don, growing pale with anger. "What's the reason you won't marry us?"

"I have a good and all-sufficient reason. This young woman is already married."

"It's false! it's false!" cried Juan hotly.

"It is not false. Nola Norris was married some six weeks ago to a man named Richard Bristol, the ceremony being performed by the Reverend Silas Salem. The certificate Mr. Salem placed in my possession for safe-keeping, and I have it in my pocket-book now!"

"I care not a fig for that!" fairly screamed the Don. "The fellow Bristol was killed in a railroad accident between Santa Fe and Pueblo, nearly a month ago, and this lady is consequently a widow, and free to marry whoever she pleases. I command you to proceed with the ceremony, sir!"

"And I forbid you to!" cried Deadwood Dick, stepping quickly forward and covering the Don with his revolver, while, with his other hand, he tore away his disguise. "I am Richard Bristol and I am here to thwart this detestable scoundrel's schemes. Juan Mellique, your game is up! Dare to move a muscle and you are a dead man, you infamous villain and double-dyed murderer!"

Then, casting the false wig and beard to the floor, Dick drew a silver whistle from his pocket and blew three sharp blasts upon it.

Instantly the parlor door swung open, and Deputy-Sheriff Burns and his men stalked into the room.

"Juan Mellique!" Burns said, advancing, and laying his hand upon the Don's shoulder. "I arrest you, in the name of the law!"

The Don had grown pale as death and he trembled like a leaf.

"In God's name, what do you arrest me for?" he gasped. "What have I done?"

"You've done more'n you'll ever get a chance to do again, I'll guarantee. I have a warrant

for your arrest for the murder of Silas and Rebecca Salem, and, besides this, there are plenty of other charges against you. So, let me have your wrists, till I see what size cuffs you wear!"

Juan hesitated a moment; then, with a yell of defiance, he made a desperate spring, succeeding in tearing himself away from the deputy's grasp, and at once bounding toward the door; but, ere he could reach it, he was confronted by a person who had just entered.

That person was Myra Mellique!

In her hand she clutched a cocked revolver; and her face was pale and stern with resolve.

"Back! Juan Mellique!" she cried, "for your time has come. You purposely killed my father, and I'm here now to avenge his death before the law can wreak its vengeance on you for your crimes." Then there was a sharp report—a scream of mortal agony, a heavy fall—then another report, and another fall.

Don Juan—the demon Don, he might well be called—lay stretched out upon the floor, weltering in his life-blood, while across his lifeless body was the inanimate form of the Donna.

The end had come, indeed!

The fatality of death had pursued the Spanish house of Mellique, to a point of total extermination, for, with the demise of Myra and Don Juan, the last members of a once proud race had answered the call of the Great Commander.

Much space need not be consumed in telling what remains to be told.

The double tragedy cast a pall of deepest gloom over the great mansion. It was a house of death, but not of mourning.

Defeated in their intentions of carrying the Don back to Santa Fe, a prisoner, Deputy Burns and his pards made a capture of the roughs who guarded 'The Turrets,' and then set out for the city, Avalanche remaining behind.

The Annihilator was greatly overjoyed to find Dick alive and well; but what was his joy to that of Nola, who was once more restored to the arms of her husband!

The night was spent by the inmates of the mansion in conversation. Dick, Nola, and Nathan Norris each in turn entertaining the others who were present with narrations of their experiences.

The following morning the mansion was locked up, and the party set out on their return to Santa Fe, where they arrived in safety.

Dick immediately had the will matters attended to, and then, having no desire for a further residence at 'The Turrets,' he offered the place for sale.

A party of capitalists, imbued with the belief that there was mineral wealth underneath the grim old pile, soon came along and made him a fair offer, and it was accepted.

Work was soon after begun at tearing away the grim, uncanny edifice, and probably ere this, not a vestige of it remains.

The bodies of Don Juan and his victim Jareck Wolfraven, were removed to Santa Fe, and treated to decent burial, while the remains of the ill-fated Myra—the last of the Mellique race—were borne from the elegant residence to a resting place in the beautiful cemetery, where a monument of exquisite design, brought, at great expense, from afar, indicates the loving care of Nola and her husband. It was found, upon examining her papers and effects that she had carefully arranged all her affairs and had willed everything to Nola, her foster-sister, "as some atonement for the great wrong her father Don Pedro, had done to her father, Nathan Norris," and, as there were none to question the gift and possession the sumptuous place passed peacefully into Nola's keeping and occupancy. The body of Simeon Sykes has never been found. What the demon Don did with it is a mystery to this day.

Tired of his New Mexican experiences, Dick accompanied by his lovely bride, her father, and Old Avalanche, at length bade adieu to Santa Fe, and set out for the more northern territories.

The Mellique mansion was left in charge of its old and tried servants—all of whom seemed to rejoice in the change which had turned the turbulent current of their lives under the Mellique reign to one of peace. In their pious and reverent, if superstitious belief, they think that Deadwood Dick had encountered and overcome Satan and his imps, and regard him as one especially sent to destroy the wicked, and to break the evil spell which hung over the very name of Mellique.

THE END.

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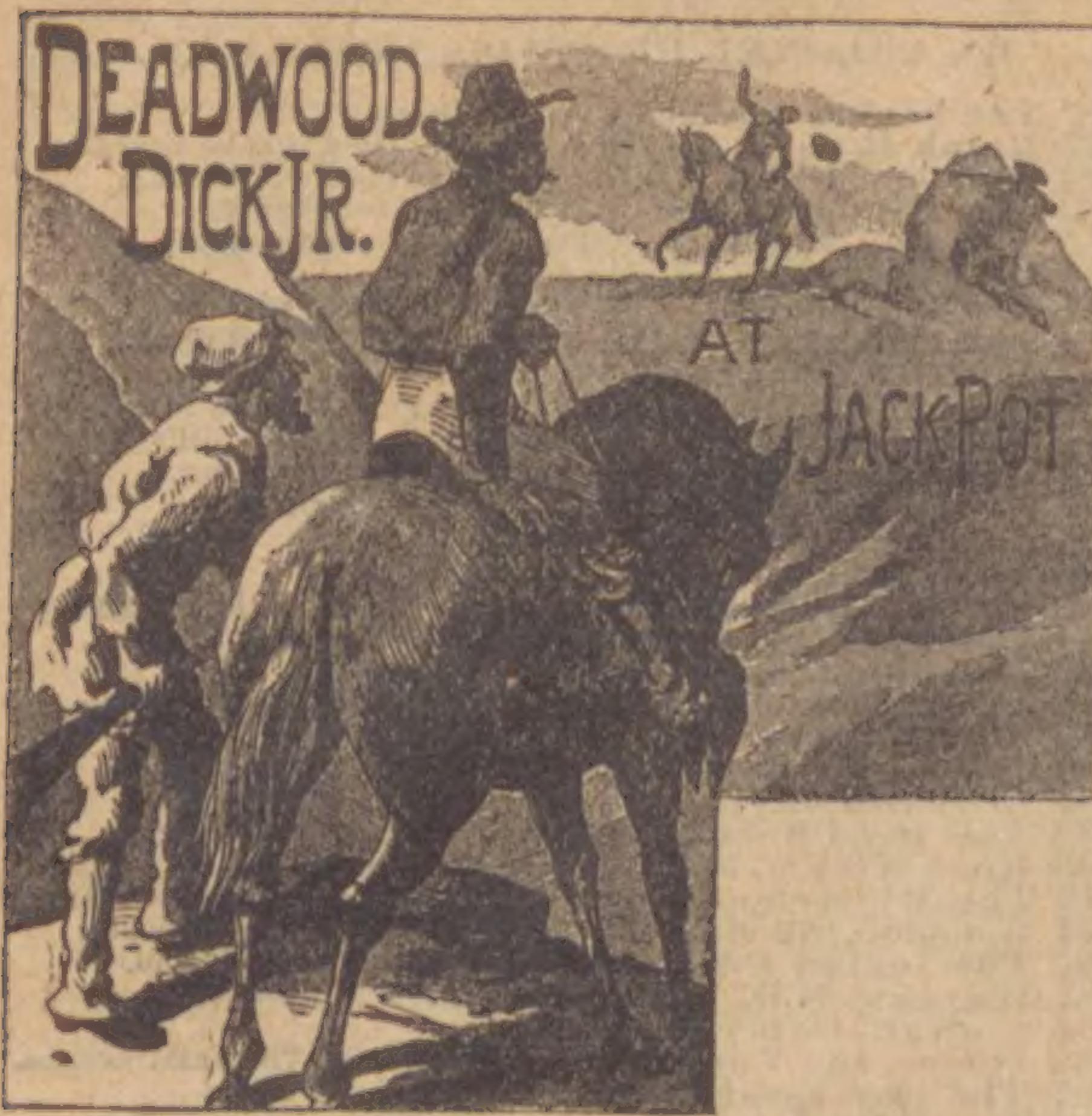
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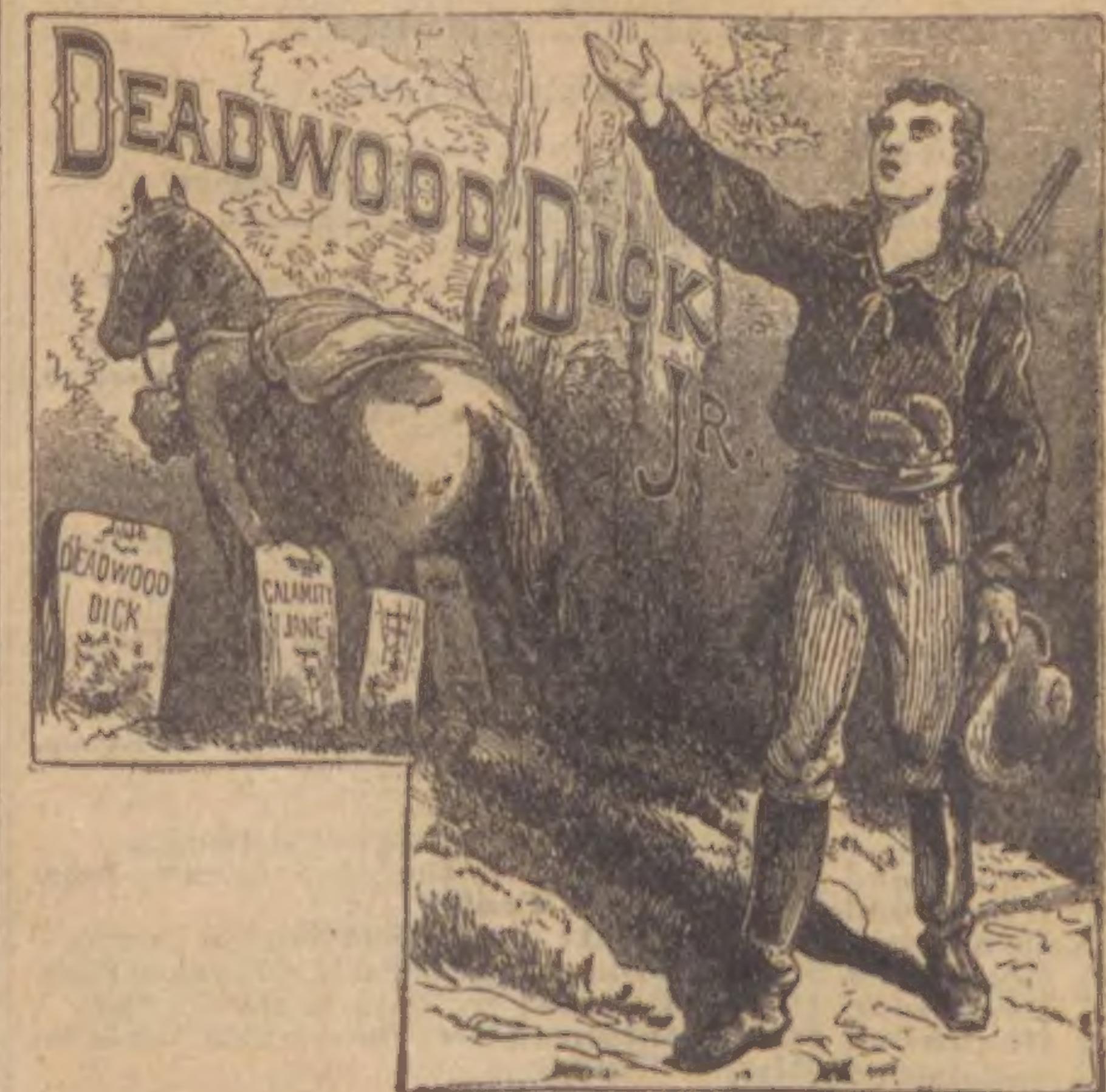
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